LARGE JAPANESE PAPER EDITION.

THE

MIRROR OF THE WORLD

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THE MIRROR OF THE WORLD

BY

OCTAVE UZANNE

AUTHOR OF "THE FAN," "SUNSHADE," ETC.

With One Hundred and Sixty Illustrations by Paul Avril

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JOHN C. NIMMO

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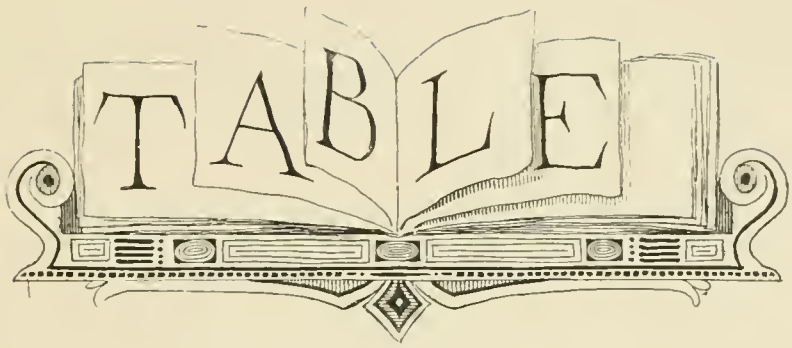

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PROSCENIUM.

" Most people living in this world do not know it, for the same reason that cockchafers do not know natural history."—CHAMFORT.

O POLYMATHIC *and particular readers, come hither . . . and make your confession!—At the mere sight or mention of this title,* The Mirror of the World, *will you not pour on our head a complete and brilliant "middle-agey" bibliography, and uselessly disturb the dust of the rarest incunabulas?—Yes, certainly, we possess already the* Speculum vitæ humanæ *of Rodericus Zamorensis, also the* Speculum humanæ salvationis, *brought again to light by the learned brother Johann, of the monastery of Saint-Ulrich, and finally the* Speculum triplex *of Vincent of Beauvais, without forgetting the most illustrious* Myrrour of the World, *the first beautiful work with engravings published in England, and printed in Westminster Abbey, by William Caxton, somewhere about* 1581.—*Is this all?*

Prithee, gentlemen, calm your erudite ardour, and cease to drone over this book the litanies of your reflective memory. The

Mirror of the World, *which is presented here to the admiring visual rays of the public of Heliopolis, has nothing in common with the eccentric catoptrics of your rigmarole of old books, and borrows its splendour neither from the obsidian of bibliognosy, nor its reflection from the phengite of the catholic redeemers of antiquity.—It is a mere little looking-glass to hold in the hand, of very modern make, facet cut, coquettishly polished as the* Aîné-y-sourid *of Oriental tales, and its shape does not affect the spherical pretensions of the universal omniscience that might be ascribed to it.*

The author's only inclination was to complete a work of polylogy, light and sparkling as paradoxical zigzags, or startling as the outbursts of an independent mind, a shadowy, irridescent, nacreous work, as inconsistent and fugitive as all the soap bubbles of human vanities or illusions.

He has, therefore, done his best to set in a sumptuous frame, heavily laden with ornaments, certain thoughts of perhaps a rather slight character, but thickly tinged by the black or blue of his fleeting impressions, without thinking to speak like Vauvenargues *or* Rivarol *in these new perspectives of a work essentially created for the recreative ballad of the eye.—Allowing himself to be smoothly drifted along by his sensations, the unfortunate type-fancier, the companion of Paul Avril, has meandered amidst the picturesque drawings of the artist, as a gurgling and babbling brook—what Fénelonesque imagery!—forces its way through large bosky sites and dingles of infinite variety, now rattling in the merry sunlight over the pebbly soil, again rushing down at every winding of the road, and finally losing itself amidst sleepy depths, neath melancholic and sombre groves.*

Unless he suffers from "false vision" the aforesaid tinker of the Mirror of the World *thinks he has produced one of those agreeable and unpretending works which Horace Walpole mentions,*

one of those repositories people open when they have the gout, when they are more bored than usual, or when they are waiting for some visitors; one of those smart essays, irradiated by gay colours, expelling from our eyes the monotonous black, just short enough to serve as an entr'acte between two leisure hours, and not long enough to pin down the butterfly fluttering in our brain; a book, in short, which our looks devour, which we leave off and take up again, which allures us by the very reason that it does not engage us, an almost ideal short treatise, divided in as many chapters as the budget of enjoyments of this life, an elegant book, partly a keep-sake, and partly a formulary of morals, easy to love and to practise thoughtlessly as the prayer-book of a mundane religion, as digestible as nourishing pills clad in golden copes, a book that slides down smoothly, arranged, as one would wish it, for an asthmatic century.

In allowing himself to be completely disguised by a fanciful artist, who has known how to clothe ingeniously his pleasant explanatory versions, the innovating and fantastic but philodoxical author has repulsed any attempt at tight-fitting; he did not wish to have a man in livery stick to his phrases, not liking at all to feel himself followed too closely by faithful or ill-timed zeal. He has, thus, placed in the hands of the "costumier" but the outlines of his thoughts, lit up from a dim distance; hence it follows that many of the draperies scarcely fit, except only those things not expressed but floating in the ambient air of a sylleptic impression; whilst, at other times, we find only decked out the servant of a rather pretentious idea, too stubborn to allow its measure to be taken.

Moreover, we may be allowed to think that the marriage of pen and pencil, of ideologic and graphic art, in perfect communion of expression and feeling, will never be anything but a complete Utopia. Between them can only exist a kind of free union, with

some rovings and infidelities when away from one another. Thus Music, united to Poetry, only narrows and deforms it by sending it down the rolling-mill of tenors' throats.—The Nine Muses are sisters; they can unite, as the doomed women of Baudelaire, but to corrupt each other—a sapphic union is graceful but remains barren. Apollo, on the contrary, appears always alone; a courtier, infatuated by his own glory, he pursues Daphne, but secretly desires to see her metamorphosed into a laurel. For every expression of art must be subjective, lofty, and, for that very reason, rebellious to interpretation. The ideal sensation of personality is untranslatable, it remains not less isolated than isolating. The sisterhood of Arts is, consequently, as silly and as ridiculous as the fraternity of peoples; every original artist doing what Narcissus did, looks at his own reflection in his own fountain.—Let us preserve, therefore, for ever the Apollonian myth. It suffices to illumine truth, and to colour with its prism the entire lyre of the Beautiful.

O. U.

The world and Society

THE WORLD
AND
SOCIETY.

"The little marionettes
Turn round, round, round
Three times gently,
And then go away."
—Old Roundelay.

We sell ourselves to the world so cheaply that in the end we pay very highly to serve it; we sacrifice body and soul to it, and our sole reward are bubbles and idle expectations. O treacherous world! sometimes you exalt us, at other times you humble us; sometimes you cheer us, and at other times you distress us. You bestow honours on the proud to surrender him afterwards to contempt; you leave to the miser riches in order to increase his indigence; you prostitute women to the voluptuary, so that his health may be destroyed; and you lull the lazy man into idleness, so that he may die and become benumbed by sloth. Your falseness is known to us; and yet we very greedily swallow your sweetened venom, until death surprises us and sends us to eternity, where divine justice dispenses the wages for the services rendered to you.

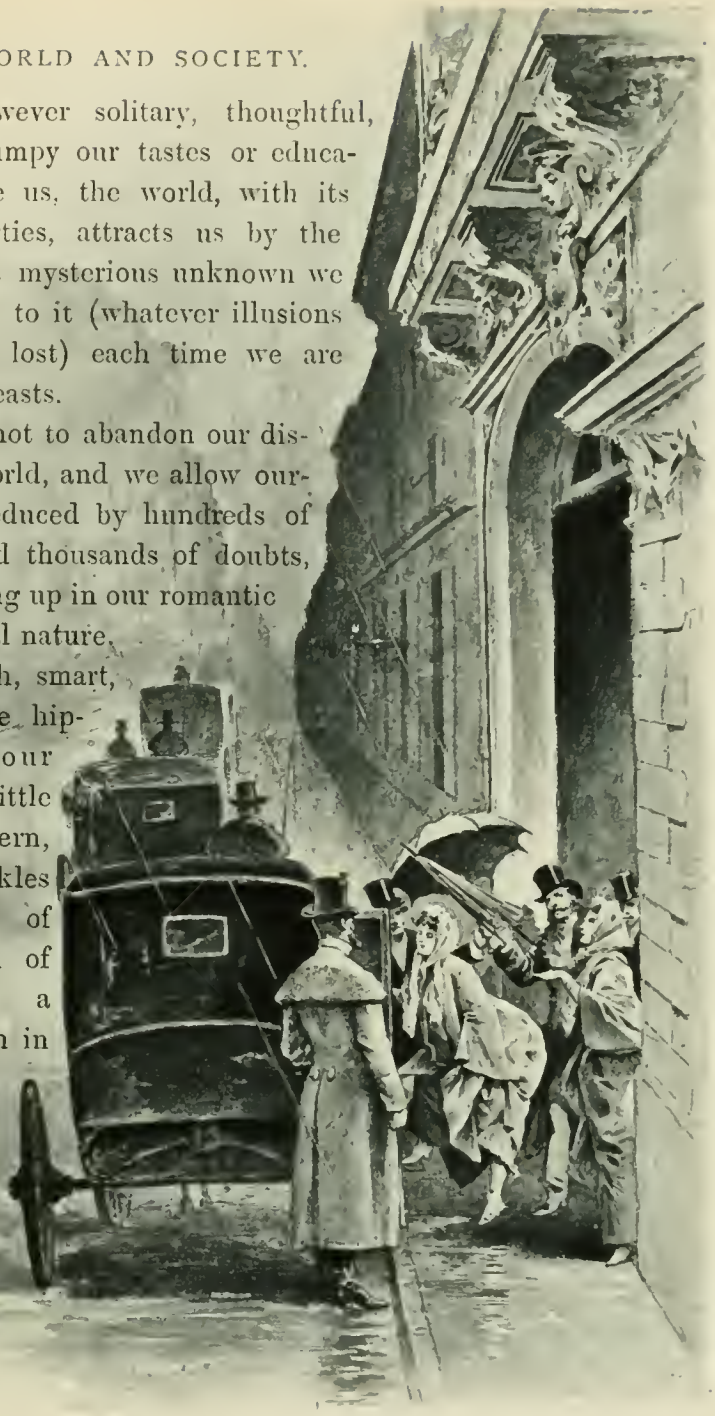
The Jeremiah, who bewails with such a sombre pessimism the world and society, is a certain unknown Swedish philosopher, Count Oxenstiern, who died early last century. Moralists, in

general, are not much more tolerant when they come to consider any inroads on social ties, or the sorrows hidden underneath brilliant mundane relations. The world is not worth so many invectives; there is only one way to enter it, but there are a hundred to leave it, spoke Montaigne maliciously. Of society it may also be said that nothing is easier than to withdraw from it; for if some reap there nothing, others make the most of their acquaintances, and cleverly use social hypocrisies as a lever for their ambition.

Whether society be compared to a cage full of madmen, or to a ship filled with fools, it is nevertheless the expression of civilised and luxurious life; we must traverse it, if not halt there, were it merely to complete our studies by a contact with men and women. Moreover, to speak

the truth, however solitary, thoughtful, retired, or grumpy our tastes or education has made us, the world, with its noise and parties, attracts us by the charm and the mysterious unknown we love to ascribe to it (whatever illusions we may have lost) each time we are invited to its feasts.

We swear not to abandon our dislike for the world, and we allow ourselves to be seduced by hundreds of suggestions and thousands of doubts, always springing up in our romantic and sentimental nature. We arrive fresh, smart, enticed on the hippogriff of our ideal with a little Diogenes' lantern, in which sparkles the glimmer of an expectation of meeting with a man or a woman in this conceited crowd; we leave our chrysalis in the anteroom, and the heap of clothes, of uniform ugly shape and sad-



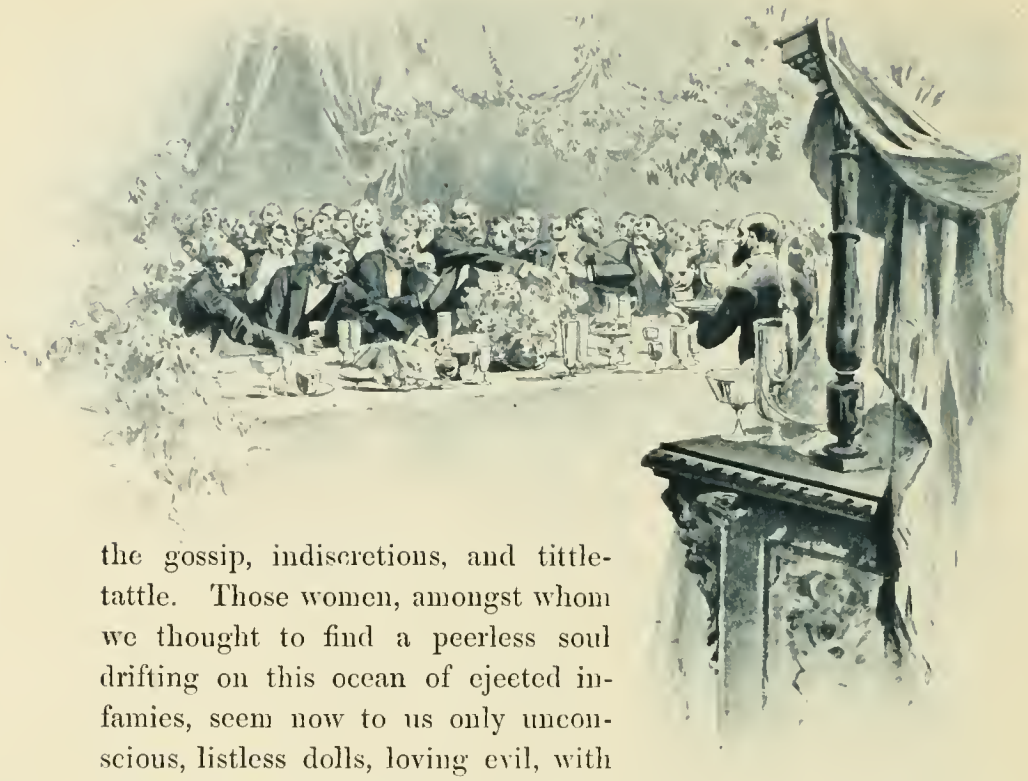
ness of hue, already fills our mind with sombre and ominous forebodings. We enter, utter some commonplace compliments to the lady of the house, shake hands, right and left, bow and smile, and grin and wink with might and main. In a first drawing-room are some females stuck on seats, side by side, imprisoned by their stays, sad and resigned to their being exhibited collectively. Standing up, frightened but smiling, hardly being able to move, half choked, closely pressed, without elbow-room, men of all ages push each other, advance with difficulty somehow, their brows covered with perspiration, with the curious gait of ninnies expecting something to happen. Some scraps of disconnected phrases, early news picked up in the street, are heard everywhere, but without any pretence to regular conversation; people have come to see and to be seen, working out a kind of joint-stock vanity, of which the host and the guests hope to touch the dividends by their names being mentioned in next day's newspapers, or being transmitted orally to other drawing-rooms. Time flies amidst this nothingness, and when we enter our carriage neath an icy, wintry sky, worn out, tired, benumbed, full of emptiness and moral weariness, and drive away, amidst a snowstorm, through the lonely street, we feel that we are as stupid as possible, dulled by the incredible nullity of those slight acquaintances, furious at having deceived ourselves, sorry for having deserted our hearth, where, the lamp lit, amidst home comforts and beloved objects selected by ourselves, some winged minds, souls full of song, the friends of every hour, fortifying and irradiating books, await us, ready to make us forget by their elevation the human splashes of the day.

We then retake possession of our being and our home with a certain kind of voluptuousness; we put ourselves under strict arrest for having idly strayed amidst the fair of triumphant follies; we

think we are for ever disabused, and our Diogenes' lantern, tired of being alight, has become covered up, if not gone out. For the moment we are no longer allured by attractions from without; shut up in our retreat, we remain, for one or several weeks, observing the vibration of our own sensations, and lead a reflective life, which is a hundred times more romanesque than a worldly life; then, one fine morning, the weathercock turns round and creaks; our judgment undergoes a change, a shower of invitations descends on our table, inveigling us by promises and allurements; we ask ourselves if we are not our worst enemy as well as of our pleasant and temporary acquaintances; we rekindle our lantern, saying to ourself that man is but a shadow, that life is a dream; that we must think, with Gratian, that a wise man is a Proteus who is mad with madmen, learned amongst the learned, a saint amongst the saints, and jolly with the merry. We persuade ourselves that similarity being the connecting link of kindheartedness, it is our social duty to become more pliable and graceful, and to win hearts with less haughty æsthetic chivalry, and with more current coin stamped with a die everybody knows.

Behold us starting again, decked out in a dress-coat, in search of the best of modern societies. Balls, *soirées*, lectures, dinners, afternoon teas, we spend our time diligently everywhere; we put ourselves as much as possible on a level with the cold and fashionable alacrity and the ordinary commonplace talk which does not set anything on fire. We superficially stir up the receptacle of everyday futilities, talk about the theatre, of so much consequence during the present fashion of mummer-worship, about politics, and, above all, about women, amongst men in the smoking-room, whilst each time some witty fellow interrupts regular conversation by a side-splitting joke.

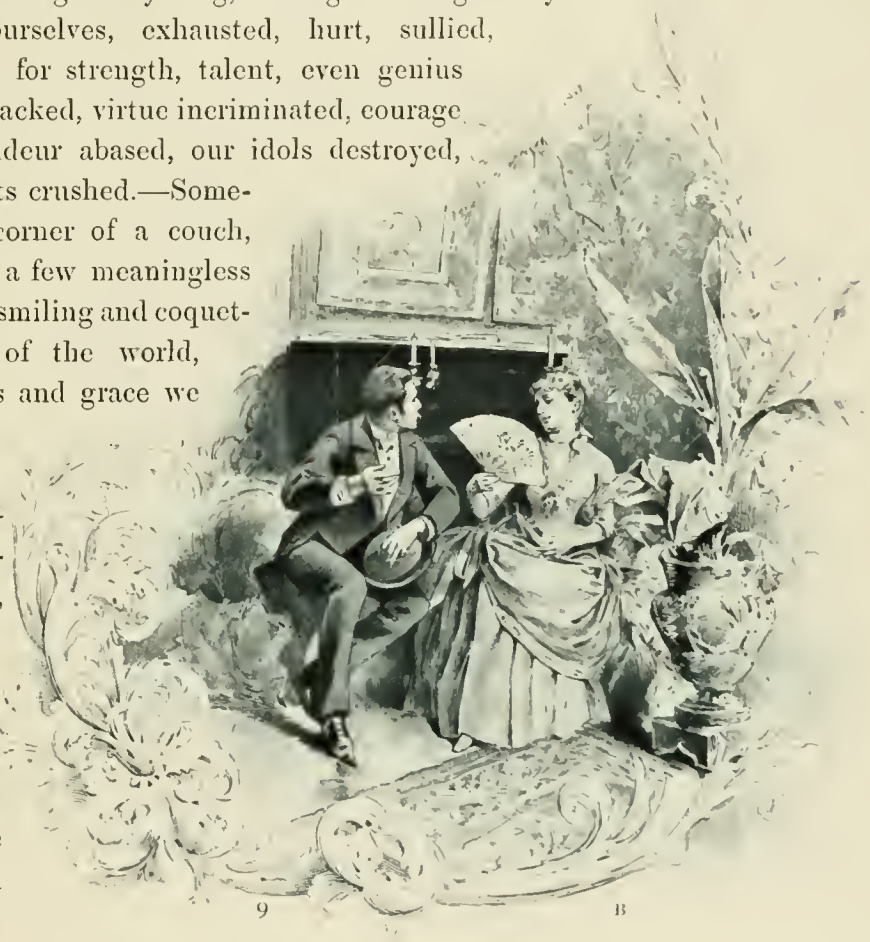
Disgust anew gets hold of us when we listen to the slanders,



the gossip, indiscretions, and tittle-tattle. Those women, amongst whom we thought to find a peerless soul drifting on this ocean of ejected infamies, seem now to us only unconscious, listless dolls, loving evil, with shattered nerves, perhaps really kind-hearted, but deadened by the hypocrisy of their connections; anxious to unravel mysteries they think they can guess, insatiable in studying man, condemned to an elegant life, and milliner's dummies to flatter their husbands.

Those men, with their stereotyped smile, wear on their countenances what may be called the Parisian impress, of which Balzac has given so correct an analysis: "Ambitions frustrated or dead, inward misery, hatred lulled asleep by the indolence of a life sufficiently occupied by the external and daily sight of Paris, an inappetency in search of irritants, complaints without talent, an aping of strength, the venom of outward failures exciting men to smile at every joke, to fall foul of everything that becomes grand, not to recognise the most necessary powers, to rejoice at their embarrassment, and not to care for any social forms. This Parisian evil is to the active conspiracy of energetic people what the blea is to the sap of the tree; it preserves and conceals it."

And when, at a late hour, all these human animals, swaddled in conventionalities, elegance, and decorum, half-starved, are let loose on the sideboard, do we not enjoy the admirable advantage of civilisation by beholding the cannibalism of all those appetites rushing on their food as hounds on their quarry, with the pushing, the egotism, the coarseness even of their primitive instincts? In official receptions, thanks to the rising mobocracy, it is no longer a sideboard but a trough, reached by bruising and fisticuffing; it is the populace marching to conquer gratuitous Clicquot. In all these social crowds we arrive on wings, but go back limping, doubting everything, having no longer any notion of ourselves, exhausted, hurt, sullied, discouraged; for strength, talent, even genius have been attacked, virtue incriminated, courage blamed, grandeur abased, our idols destroyed, and our spirits crushed.—Sometimes, on a corner of a couch, we exchange a few meaningless words with a smiling and coquettish woman of the world, whose charms and grace we appreciate; but the dialogue is constrained, hurried, ill-poised, for we feel that this superficial acquaintance must never become intimate, and



without time ever permitting us to strike more deeply the hook of often sincere sympathy. Society, as it is at present, remains therefore impalpable amidst a perpetual bustle, excluding intimacy and a thorough knowledge of the beings we behold; each one rushes, in common madness, towards an uncertain goal, feverish, agitated, and frantic to make connections and to be introduced. People perceive one another, shake hands, slightly sniff, rightly or wrongly are pleased or displeased, smile and congratulate one another, exchange a good many falsehoods, and led away by fresh desires, leave to see each other again for a second at certain turns on the road of life.

What does the "dear friend" in our demoniacal society mean? —A gentleman met by chance in a drawing-room, to whom we have been introduced and mumbled a few phrases, and with whom we have eaten some sandwiches; we know, we feel it will never go beyond this, but we address and call each other "dear friend," exchange cards, loose verbal invitations which are not taken seriously by either of us; vaguely we say, "Come and see me . . . you know, Thursday;" and the person thus addressed, also a humbug, replies, "Certainly, as soon as possible; I have a good memory, don't be afraid;" and then we disappear carelessly, stimulated by these meaningless words, carried away by the crowd, stopped on our way by other "very dear friends," scarcely known, always smiling, overflowing with praises, who have made of friendly commonplaces an absurd art and sport.

To the thoughtful man going out alone, absorbed in the duality and progress of his dreams, to the brain-worker composing phrases or melodies according to the rhythm of the carriages, to the happy Parisian always humming a tune, and sick of illusions, all those friendships for external use are mere hindrances, disagreeable links, vexations to which one gets accustomed as to the useless tremulous music of ancient melodramas; for those connections

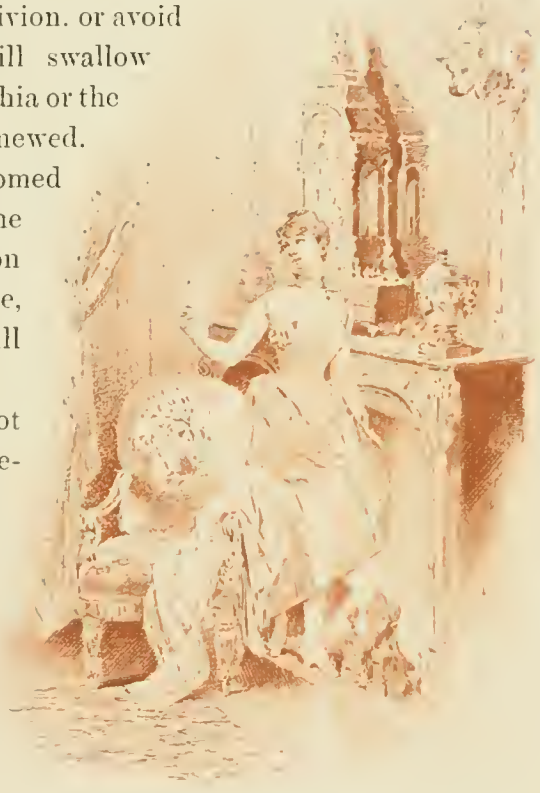
form somehow the tremolo of active and inner life; we succeed in creating a special box for our intellect, where we lodge a kind of keeper of commonplaces who replies for us, without disturbing the soaring of our thoughts.—Were it not so, life would become a prison where the bored bores would be the warders of analysts and dreamers, charmed and benumbed, as it were, by a focus of concentric thoughts.

There exists, however, a select society, with doors scarcely ajar, where gaiety enters and sits down without ceremony, where everything within us expands in a warm feeling of comfort, a desire to talk in an often paradoxical but always high-toned conversation; in those rare circles, where still lingers the superstition of the old proverb, "When there are more than ten, ears grow," we begin again to love our fellow-men, and to lull asleep our severity and habitual disgust; philosophy becomes jovial, eccentric, erratic, and good-natured, indulgent in a Christian-like manner to all weaknesses and platitudes; for in this select company we meet refined partners, with whom it is the greatest of pleasures to converse; we hobnob really with our brain with these same reserved visitors, so timid, dull, obscure, and silent in great noisy assemblies, but so penetrating, subtle, complex, and characteristic in a duologue. Then we no more lightly indulge in soft graceful talk, without any expression; we look on each other, as moral strategists, ready to steal away if the supposed enemy is not strong enough, happy to lay down our arms if we perceive him watchful and amply provided with ammunition in the deep casemates of his erudition and fancy. In those special meetings we feel amongst friends, with the same ideas and sympathies, we are at home; we can abandon ourselves and say what we think, get rid of con-

ventionalities, and infringe a little those stupid social rules. We become better there, more flexible and younger; dancing is no longer the ridiculous silliness of high life, it becomes a theme for conversation whilst moving about, a seductive country dance, with chatty and naturally lovely women on our arm, and not creatures stifled and stiffened by rigid hypocrisy; it gives us fresh and odoriferous flowers instead of the artificial roses of social obligations fixed on wires.

Chamfort, that admirable cynic, used to say, "Society shrivels up many men, but it reduces women to nothing." We may be allowed to ask ourselves of what all those poor women, who dress, chatter, and undress, are thinking after they have left those fashionable parties, have gone home, warm themselves before going to bed, and see again rise up before them, amidst the sound of the waltz-music still ringing in their ears, their empty evening's amusement, with the idle words, coquettish compliments, and ambient jealousy of other women. If in these bodies, so full of incitement to love, dwells a lofty mind superior to the intoxication of easy conquests, what must they suffer, and how dejected must they feel! how will those delicate birds of paradise shiver at feel-

ing themselves so lonely, after having returned to the nest still warm with the ideal hatching of their dreams and their cordial and intellectual ambitions! How sick must they feel of those men with ready-made ideas, uniform compliments, vulgar ambitions, identical manners! They also, those Danaïdes of the unfathomable, must think that their life is a yawning and hollow abyss, in which there is but a hellish noise of laughter, pranks, foolish flirting, coquettish display, dressing, public exhibitions and perpetual adoration.—Dante has forgotten this infernal cycle, and the unfortunate Cytherean of a waltzing, polkaing, and nocturnal society, by turns receiving and received—if they yet have a soul—disgusted with their existence (which they think they cannot abandon without losing caste) can seek oblivion, or avoid seeing the abyss which will swallow them up, in the abuse of morphia or the poison of a lover always renewed. In thinking of these doomed women, we remember, as the end of a ballad, the conclusion of an old tale of Montaigne, "Doubtless the muleteer will also get his hour."



"Do not forget," Diderot wrote, "that, for want of reflection, nothing penetrates to a certain depth of conviction into the understanding of women; that ideas of virtue, vice, goodness, wickedness, float on the top of their souls; that they have preserved self-love

and personal interest with innate energy; and that, outwardly, more civilised than we are, they remain, inwardly, real savages, all more or less Machiavelian."

However this may be, without them society, of whose ugliness we have just caught a glimpse, would no longer possess the least allurement, or the smallest attraction of the unknown. Women form the manners even when they deform them, and society is mercilessly swayed by their laws. Thanks to them, and however unpleasant the world may be, they bring thither their choice elegance, and the splendour of their beauty. When we are much bored at a stupid party, they make our eyes sup on so varied a *menu*, that we are dazzled on entering, and soon intoxicated as well as consumed; they sway us by the desires hovering round them, by the caprices to which they give rise, and sometimes by the passions which they drive to despair. When love kindles their faculties, they seem divine and resplendent, and when they only smile at the enterprises directed against their heart, they may become tender and affectionate friends. Their lightheartedness dispels our sadness, and their delicacy attenuates the vulgarity of men; finally, and this is the very reason of our ignorance whenever they are in question, we feel ourselves led, against our will, in this desert of the world; for woman, like the sphinx, carries, written on her brow, the symbol of the Apocalypse, the word which excites our curiosity, this *Mystery of mysteries*, which is like the *Song of Songs* of our faltering incredulity.

To resume, it is wise not to delay studying all those social conventionalities, even in early youth, so as to loosen those stays stiff with hypocrisy, supporting the heavy and free and easy charms of social life. We should, as our fathers said, distinguish between the skin and the shirt, not be ashamed openly to contemn so many base things covered up, and not care for opinion, which, according to the moralist, only governs the world, because folly governs fools. The world and fashion should neither be followed too closely nor at too great a distance; it would be ridiculous to withdraw from them entirely and completely, and silly to submit to them blindly. We should often keep up our contempt by going into society, so as better to guard our happiness at home. What Madame de Staël thought of glory, that "it was the splendid grave of happiness," we might say of the world. We bring to it our gold, and it returns us bad coin; its power is founded on prejudices, vanity, calculations; when in it we put a crape on reason, truth, and sentiment.

Of all the moralists of society, La Rochefoucauld has, perhaps, best expressed our real duties towards it in the following words: "To make society easy, each man should preserve his liberty. We should visit each other without compulsion, and leave each other without this separation producing any change. We should do without one another, if we do not

wish to risk and embarrass one another; we should remember that often we incommode when we think we never do. As much as possible, we ought to contribute to the enjoyment of those amongst whom we live; but not always be compelled to do so."

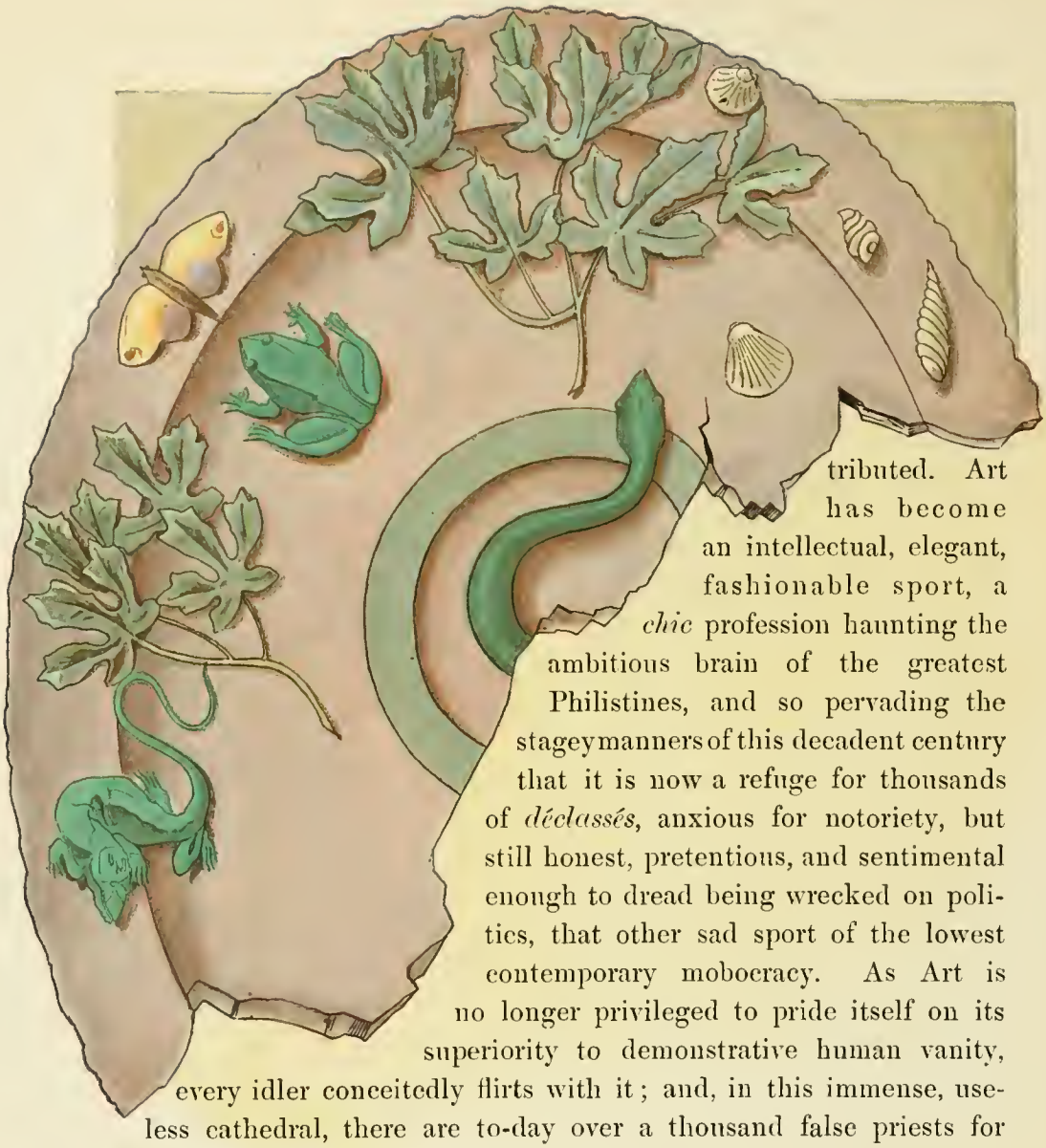
We should, above all, live in the world, and be satisfied with it. "A gentleman," writes Montaigne, "is not responsible for the follies or vices of his fellows."

ARTS
AND
LITERATURE

ARTS AND LITERATURE.

"I like creators, other men appear
to me of no account."—VOLTAIRE.

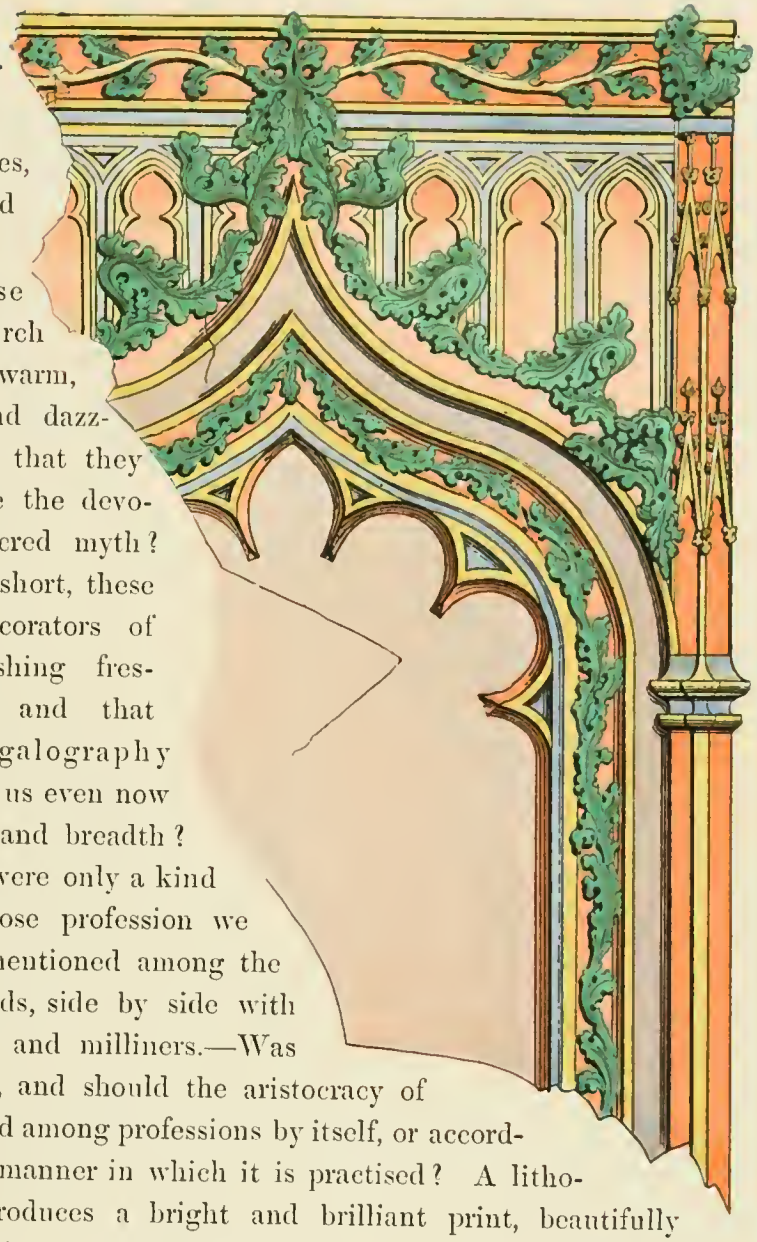
THE allegory of the grasshopper and the ant is no longer applicable to the liberal professions; the country of Bohemia has disappeared from our ethnography, and the palace of the Fine Arts has become an outside exchange, where the Philistines of the pallet turn their æsthetic sentiments into good bills payable to bearer. The formidable crowd of all sorts of artists who now rush upon success, publicity, a quick reputation, amidst noisy puffs and the turmoil of mediocratic assemblies, gradually discourages observation. All kinds of talents have become multiplied so profusely, under every form, that the condensed enthusiasm of each individual has quietly become changed into commonplace bad coin, of compulsory circulation, which deprives of all meaning the praise everywhere so bountifully dis-



tributed. Art has become an intellectual, elegant, fashionable sport, a *chic* profession haunting the ambitious brain of the greatest Philistines, and so pervading the stageymanners of this decadent century that it is now a refuge for thousands of *déclassés*, anxious for notoriety, but still honest, pretentious, and sentimental enough to dread being wrecked on politics, that other sad sport of the lowest contemporary mobocracy. As Art is no longer privileged to pride itself on its superiority to demonstrative human vanity, every idler conceitedly flirts with it; and, in this immense, useless cathedral, there are to-day over a thousand false priests for one final devotee.

The fault of this ominous confusion lies in our so-called liberal ideas. It was, indeed, a police regulation of the Revolution which established a distinction between artists and artisans. What were, in reality, formerly, those admirable plastic workers of marble and stone; those chisellers of bronze, those practised craftsmen of enamel, tin, wood, and clay; those wonderful potters who have

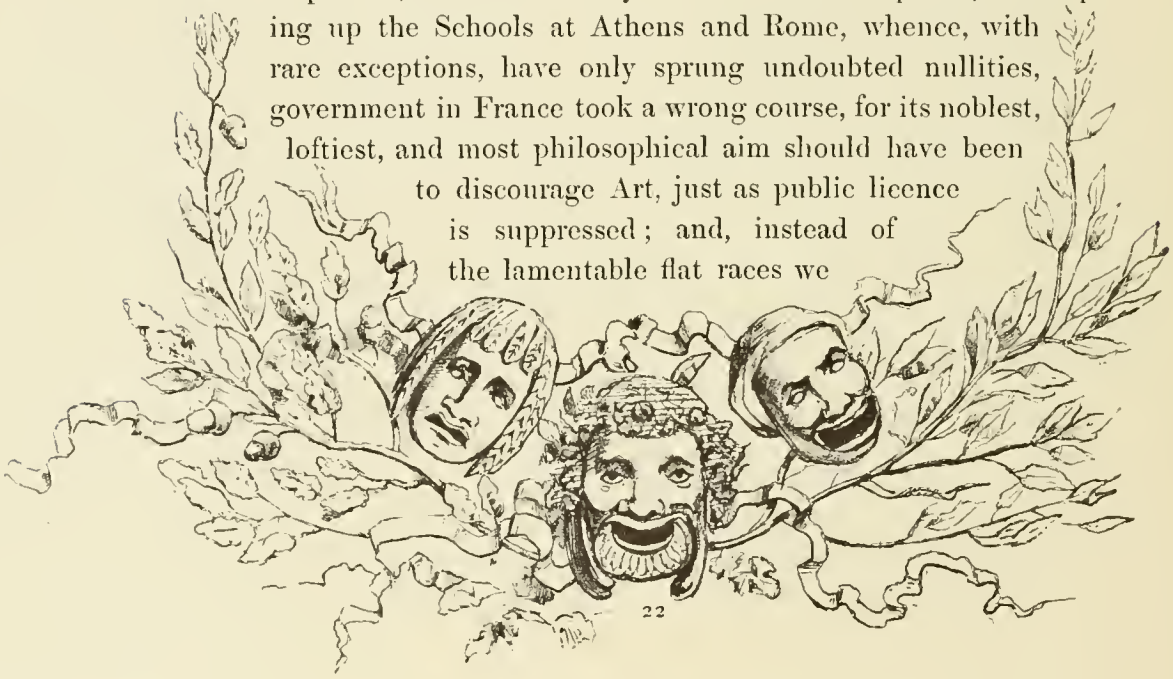
left us such incomparable specimens of their glazed or inlaid vases, of their raised earthenware or pottery; those painters of church windows, so warm, harmonious, and dazzling in colour, that they seem to swathe the devotion to the sacred myth? What were, in short, these astonishing decorators of all sorts, lavishing frescoes, ceilings, and that historical megalography which surprises us even now by its boldness and breadth? These masters were only a kind of artisans, whose profession we generally find mentioned among the trades and guilds, side by side with cobblers, tilers, and milliners.—Was this not logical, and should the aristocracy of Art be considered among professions by itself, or according to the lofty manner in which it is practised? A lithographer who produces a bright and brilliant print, beautifully drawn, is an artist; a painter who shows us a middling picture, without any originality, is only a bad artisan; and, to speak the truth, how many are there, at present, among the daubers officially

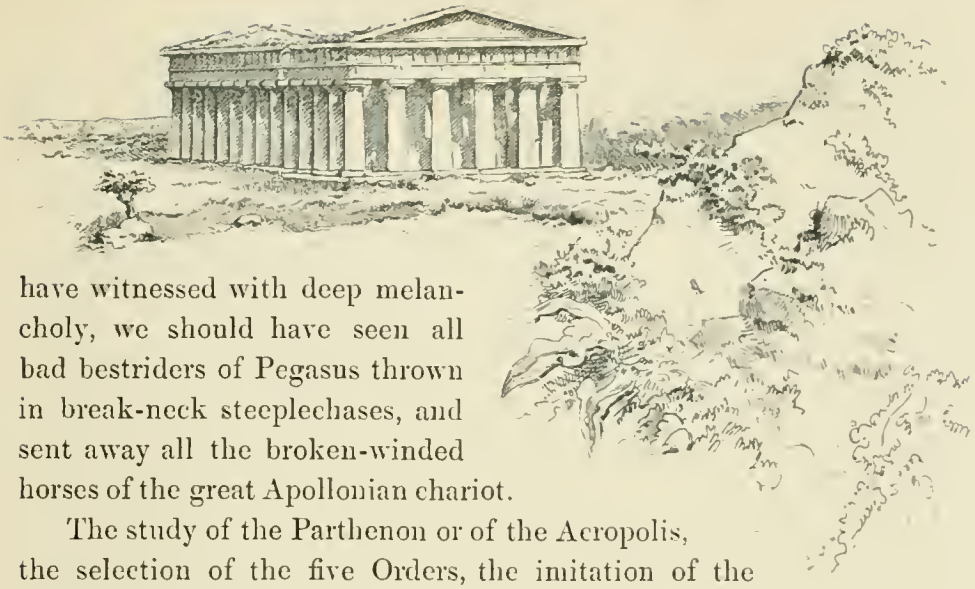


rewarded, who would perhaps only be fit to paint sign-boards, and how many sculptors of busts whom the corporation of stucco-workers would unanimously refuse to admit in its midst !

An artist is not improvised : he is self-created by his taste, the force of his individuality, and, above all, by his genius. In drawing a distinction between the liberal arts and other professions, more harm than good has been done, for people did not see that a way would be opened for every silly vanity and conceit. The result was not long in coming; each one has ennobled himself; and we behold a row of artists numerous enough to fill a directory, from the capillary artist convinced of his superiority to the dramatic artist who, disdaining his former name of comedian, pretends not to be confounded with the Merry Andrews, jack-puddings, provincial mountebanks, and Scaramouches of the fair.

In letting loose the vanity of Art, art-produce has arisen, the most monstrous of all things, because it poisons and falsifies popular taste, unless it lowers Art to the level of the consumer's taste.—In pretending to protect Art, in creating special ministries and inspectors, that most costly and useless red-tapeism, in keeping up the Schools at Athens and Rome, whence, with rare exceptions, have only sprung undoubted nullities, government in France took a wrong course, for its noblest, loftiest, and most philosophical aim should have been to discourage Art, just as public licence is suppressed; and, instead of the lamentable flat races we

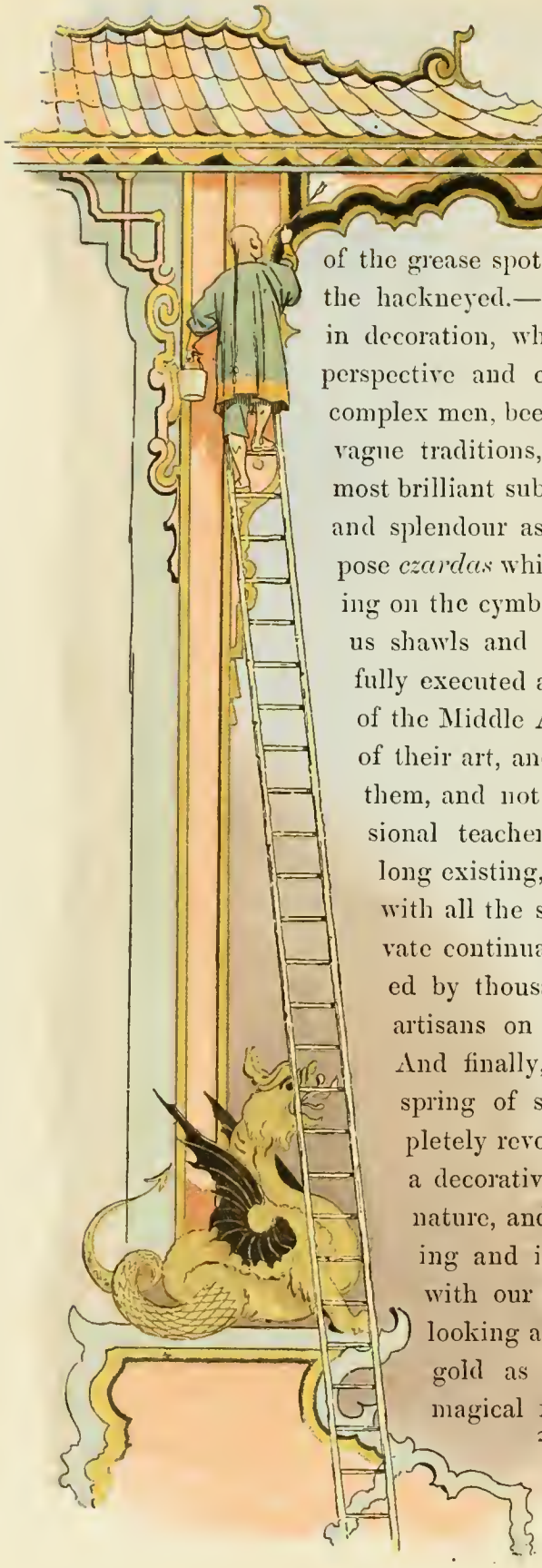




have witnessed with deep melancholy, we should have seen all bad bestriders of Pegasus thrown in break-neck steeplechases, and sent away all the broken-winded horses of the great Apollonian chariot.

The study of the Parthenon or of the Acropolis, the selection of the five Orders, the imitation of the Greek and Roman styles, the fruits of our extreme classicality, have done more harm to architecture than thrown on it an unforeseen, new, and original light. Careful visits to the museums of Italy, Spain, and Holland have given rise to judicious criticisms, but have not created as many true painters as the observation of nature alone has produced.—Great artists have always sprung up outside of governments and licensed schools; they have always derived their own strength from themselves, from their intuition and their belief in the beautiful, which is felt but cannot be dictated. How can we demonstrate that the beauties of a work sometimes spring from a fault; and that, as in mechanics, to produce anything great, we gain in strength what we lose in time? The study of antiquity, useful as a primary education, can only be deceptive as soon as the artist has full possession of himself; and, according to a remark of Voltaire, "those who persist in following the ancients are children who wish to speak to no one but to their nurse."

The leading question of to-day are the Schools of Art, the industrial and other schools, a hobby by which the ingenuous quickly allow themselves to be enticed; they admire and applaud these generous ideas, as if all these badly directed efforts were to



produce any other result than a wider extension among the masses of the grease spot of the commonplace, the trite and the hackneyed.—Have the Orientals, those masters in decoration, who import for us new horizons of perspective and colour—those clever, brilliant, and complex men, been brought up otherwise than amidst vague traditions, and do they not improvise their most brilliant subjects with as much ease, originality, and splendour as the Hungarian gipsies, who compose *czardas* whilst galloping over the violin or playing on the cymbals?—Have the Indians, who send us shawls and carpets as variegated and as skilfully executed as the most beautiful stained glass of the Middle Ages, minutely studied the theories of their art, and is this sacred flame not innate in them, and not kindled by the contact of professional teachers? Do the civilised Chinese, so long existing, so artful and exquisite, acquainted with all the secrets of the old guilds, not innovate continually in their compositions, interpreted by thousands of unknown and marvellous artisans on lacker, ivory, silk, or porcelain? And finally, have the Japanese, the new offspring of such a prodigious race, not completely revolutionised our European ideas by a decorative abundance wholly imitated from nature, and enhanced by a poetry so charming and intense, that we, enervated beings, with our dull manners, are intoxicated by looking at those sparkling colours, at their gold as bright as the sun, and at their magical fairy dreams, embroidered exube-

rantly on tissues exquisite to behold and handle? —Do these studious, observing Japanese, those gentle or tragic dreamers, so like our monks of old, not owe only to their imagination, to their visual fakirism, to their silent ecstasy, that bewitching art which dazzles us in our slow transformation, like a new star shining in a night fog?

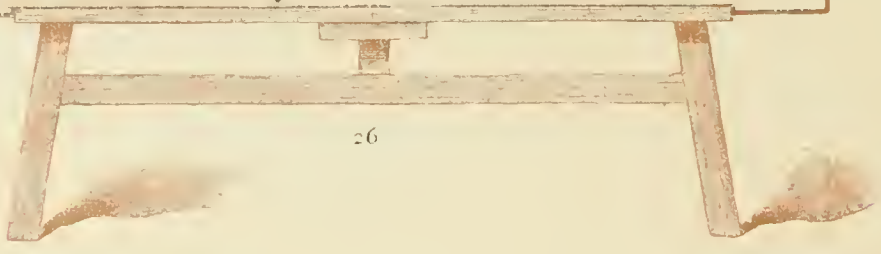
Shall I speak of music, which is also patronised and protected, though it has remained in France an art so completely anti-national that generations frantically applauded the tunes of Father Auber the little, the god of the Opéra Comique and the scribe of the cavatina, whilst poor Bizet died, not understood as a poet, almost as sadly as Gilbert or Malfilâtre?—Music is practised in chambers in quartettes, when the executants only gargarize their ears and senses, whilst the guests, almost sick, are inclined to go to sleep to conceal their being bored. Here, as elsewhere, the intelligent protection of the governing powers has produced nothing new; there is much science, too much science of harmony, and not enough of melody, of that kind of melody, traversing centuries with its

simple and sympathetic gait; above all, not enough of this exquisite and artless emotion, which will preserve for a long while, as amber keeps flies, all those never-to-be-forgotten popular tunes and songs, the richest store of our real musical history.

Balzac wrote one day: "Music is a language a thousand times more beautiful than words; it is to language what thoughts are to words. It awakens sensations and ideas under the identical form, and on the spot where ideas and sensations spring up within us, but it shapes them as they exist among each of us. This inner influence is one of the grandeurs of music; other arts impose on our mind limited creations, music is infinite in hers. . . . Music is the only art which speaks to thought by thought, without the aid of speech, form, colour . . . other arts bind our thoughts by fixing them on determined things; music allows them to roam over the whole of nature which it can express to us."

The author of *Seraphita* says also elsewhere: "When music passes from sensation to ideas, only men of genius can listen to it, for they alone have the power to develop it; it is the same with women; when love amongst them takes a divine shape, men no longer understand them."

What chiefly prevents the free soaring of modern Art is the constant study of the past, which wraps us still so much in swaddling-clothes that impulsive innovation disappears, and that the Muse no longer lisps adorable trifles. Science and erudition mummify, wither, and render pedantic all Arts. We are entangled in documents, when the ideal ignores documentary evidence; if it reconstructs anew, such a reconstruction may be wrong and contrary to historical truth, but it



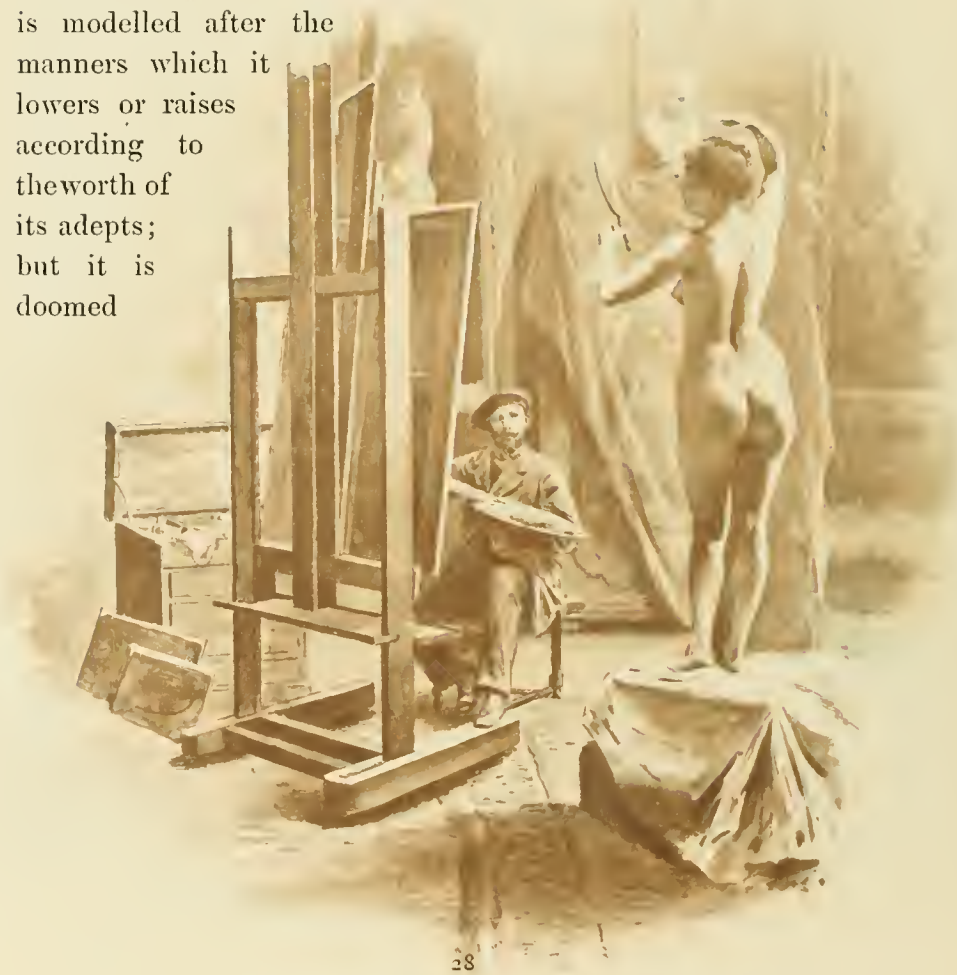
certainly is more beautiful, grand, luminous, and as actual as any disappeared reality.—Does it matter if a spectacled archæologist, with dried up and arid brain, proves to me that Flaubert was wholly in error when he reconstrued Carthage in *Salammbo*, and must I put on a hair-shirt if a disciple of Maspero shows me that the marvellous descriptions of the *Roman de la Momie* are contrary to all likelihood? Will Flaubert and Gautier be inferior artists, and will their reputation amongst literary men be slightly impaired through this?—Certainly not.

Stylists, colourists and lovers of form, ought to have studied their classics, but nothing more; the only study to interest an earnest student is that of his time, his ideas, and surroundings; were he even to study history, archæology, or philology, the artist sincerely enamoured of form will not try to escape from actual influences, which, unwittingly, will preponderate in his work.—In painting, as well as in sculpture, it is curious to observe, for example, that the æsthetic of the nude becomes transformed with each new generation, according to a certain sensitive condition of the retina, and by some unexplained suggestion of the ambient air, difficult to analyse. Those who pretend that there exists for centuries only one true and superhuman *nude*, wholly invariable in its interpretation, utter a stupid heresy; it would be interesting and curious to write the History of Woman in Art, and to show in turns the varied conceptions of the nude in painting and sculpture, from the Primitives until the present time.

Then it would be seen that about every thirty-three years a complete and quite perceptible change takes place in comprehend-

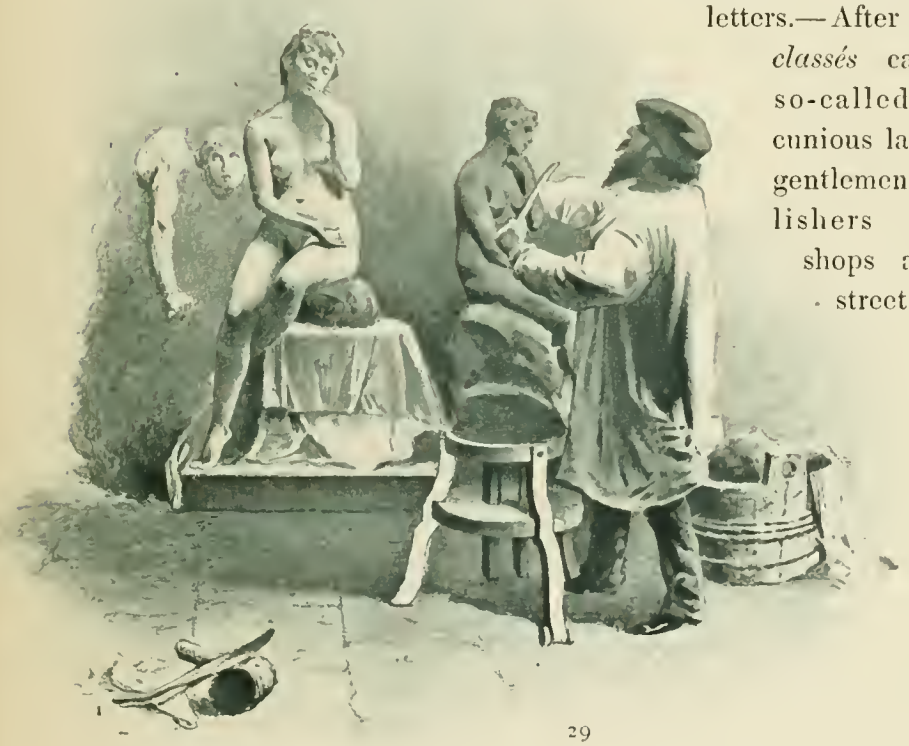
ing the nude, even if it be academical. Compare, for example, the nude of David with the nude of the latter end of the eighteenth century, so mischievous, roguish, and smiling. Oppose to David's nude the romantic nudities, so languishing and slim, with rather long, radiant necks and dazzling shoulders; come to the modern and vile nude, with its vicious and pretentious flesh, provoking and unwholesome, sometimes exceedingly attenuated, as if to excite old men's passions.—Think out this odd history of the nude in painting and sculpture, and draw your own conclusions.

Art cannot be directed; it pursues its way and is mercilessly influenced by its time; it is modelled after the manners which it lowers or raises according to the worth of its adepts; but it is doomed



to be wrecked in the decadence of a people that does not barr or oppose it, that favours it too much in its mediocrity, and encourages its beginnings, making it belie its motto: *Ad supera per aspera.*

In literature there is the same confusion; a crowd of talented literary men obscures the sun of genius; the continuous production becomes factory work, whence personality disappears more and more; the successful queen-bees go and pilfer all the flowers of social life to give us often but sorry honeycombs, of which the wax sticks in our teeth.—Finally, journalism, by modifying our literary manners from top to bottom, has introduced in the already too crowded republic of letters the most ignorant and inefficient men, so that gradually each one thinks himself suited for the thankless profession of letters.—After the *déclassés* came the so-called impecunious ladies and gentlemen; publishers opened shops at every street-corner,



and the unfortunate reading and paying public became stupefied, bewildered, and indifferent, in the land which had become a market for literature at any price.

The flower of real literary men, happily still compact, and composed of all those who early felt that they could neither resist their ruling passion nor subdue their fate, the thinkers and stylists, then fled to their cells, so as not to be discouraged by the every-day commonplace talk which mixes up merit, success, and reputation; but even the most valiant have been tainted by a vague mercantile spirit which makes them count up the number of editions, and jealously calculate the profits of their feeblest brother authors.

What is, however, the use of being a pessimist? We must console ourselves as utilitarians with the author of *Candide*, who thought that a feeble novel among books is what in society a fool is who wishes to be fanciful; people laugh at him, but they bear with him. The novel procures a livelihood to its author, to the etcher who illustrates it, to the publisher who sells it, to the typefounder and printer, the papermaker and binder, to the traveller and engraver, and to the seller of bad wine, where all these people spend their money. For two or three hours the work also amuses some women who always want new books and other novelties as well. Thus, however despicable the novel may be, it produces two important things—profit and pleasure.

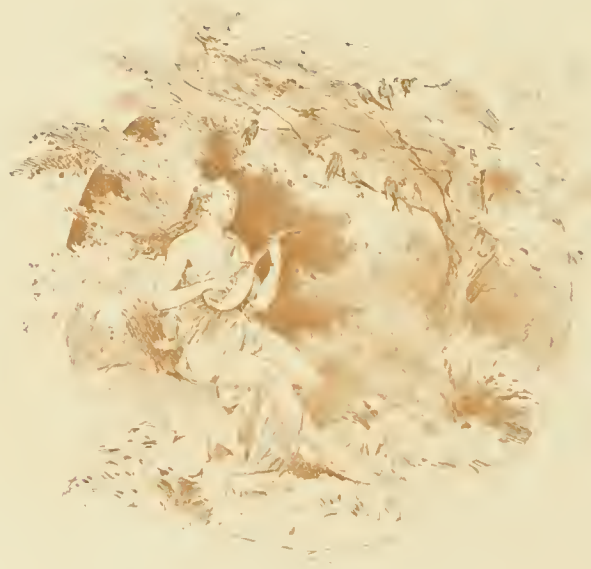
The reason that the books of the present day are so transitory and soon forgotten is to be found in our feverish, hurried, and overwrought life, in the race after actualities, the trying at any cost to be in temporary repute, and to be worshipped by fashion. We no longer

connect time with our work, and time does not respect what is produced without its aid. — Hence the arts of interpretation languish, whilst exact and mechanical process work is flourishing; wood-engraving is dying out, and etching crawling amidst its lines and cross-lines without daring to return to those old principles which were its glory at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of this—etching, that art so French in the charm of its execution and its quick results, will be gradually swallowed up by some solar reproduction, of which we can daily behold the enormous progress towards perfection and its attack on those artists ingenuous and silly enough not to defend themselves by using again mezzotint, aquatint, soft varnish, special tools, or colours well applied, and other marvellous old tricks, employed since Abraham Bosse and stupidly neglected by modern engravers, generally merely ordinary and finical workmen.

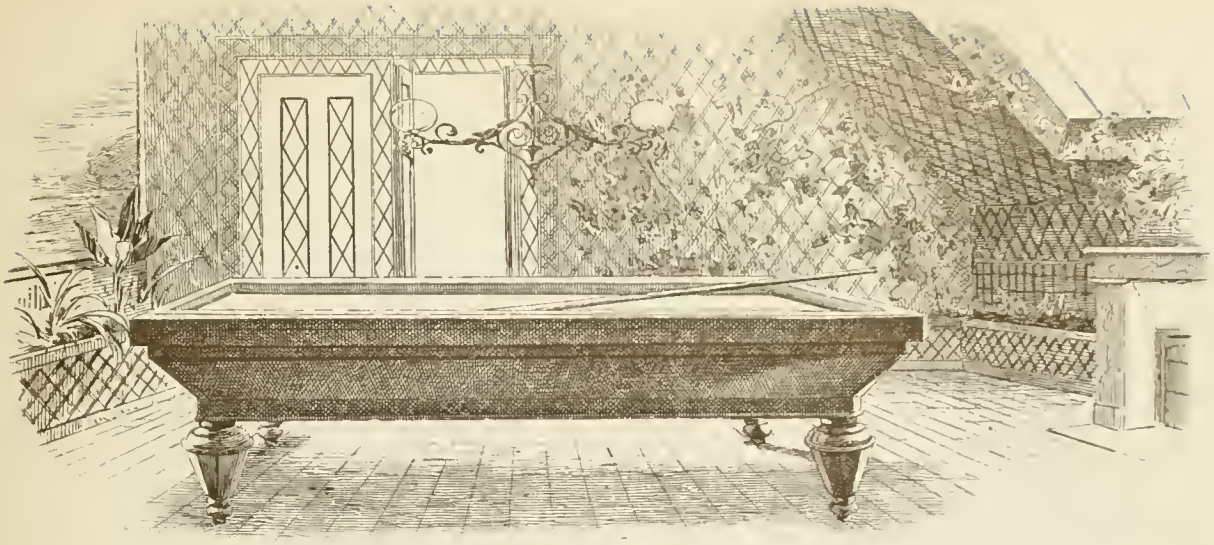
We all think, with that innate vanity peculiar to us, that France is the first artistic nation in the world, and we look too indulgently on what we produce, and too carelessly on what others do; for otherwise we might discover how cleverly our neighbours profit by our qualities, and take advantage of our faults through their laborious and continuous studies.—What we hope will for a long time maintain our supremacy is less

our real artistic power than the charm of our Taste, which is perceptible even in our weaknesses. Let us endeavour then to preserve this Taste, its delicacy, tact, and artistic harmony, which is found also in our manners, language, and fashions, and refine it by studying foreign works, without any contempt or preconceived ideas, but also without infatuation. We have been teachers through our grand traditions, and our pupils in the four quarters of the globe cleverly profit by our lessons.

Be this as it may, I should like to know what the Arts will be at the end of the twentieth century. I hope that artistic vanity will then be less silly and pretentious, and that in a wiser country artists will have frankly become what they formerly were, and should always have remained: licensed artisans.



HOME LIFE



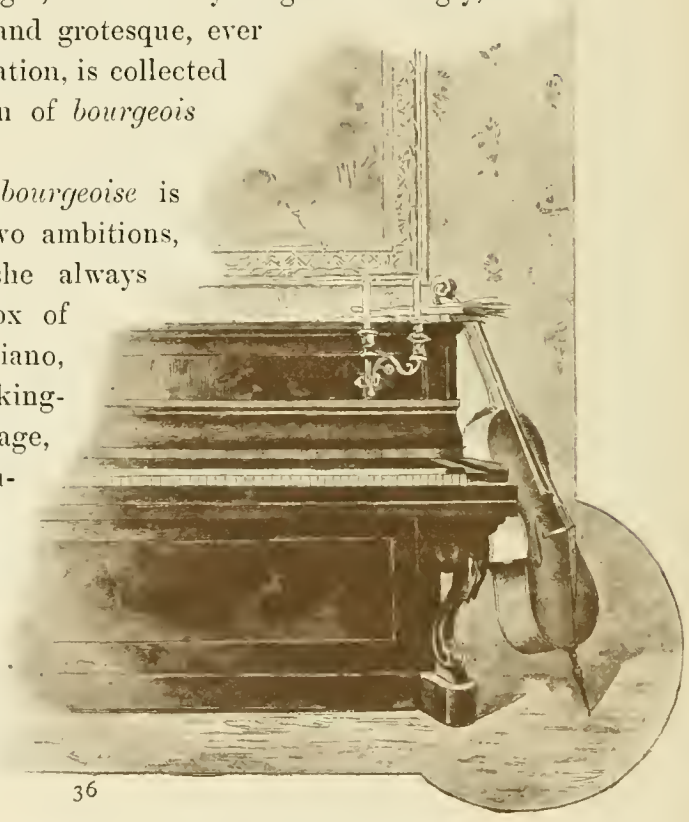
HOME-LIFE.

"Every well-organised home is the image of its master's mind."—J. J. Rousseau.

Generally the nations of Latin origin scarcely trouble themselves about adorning or making comfortable the inside of their houses; they are pretty indifferent as to the roof that shelters them, and prefer the rather noisy open-air enjoyments, the passing sensations of public resort, club or *café*-life to comfort indoors. Northern nations, and above all the English, understand better the infinite charms of a well-furnished and cosy home; they know, through a very acute perception of what a shelter needs, to combine the utmost comfort and the delights of indoor life with a taste for luxury and magnificence. If we take ten thousand Frenchmen happily well off, we would scarcely find fifty who understand what home-life means, and like it; the remainder dwell in temporary abodes, cold and bare, with hardly the necessary furniture, lamentably unprovided with those lovely superfluities which not only form the elegance of life and half of the commerce of nations, but which also enliven and cheer us, and

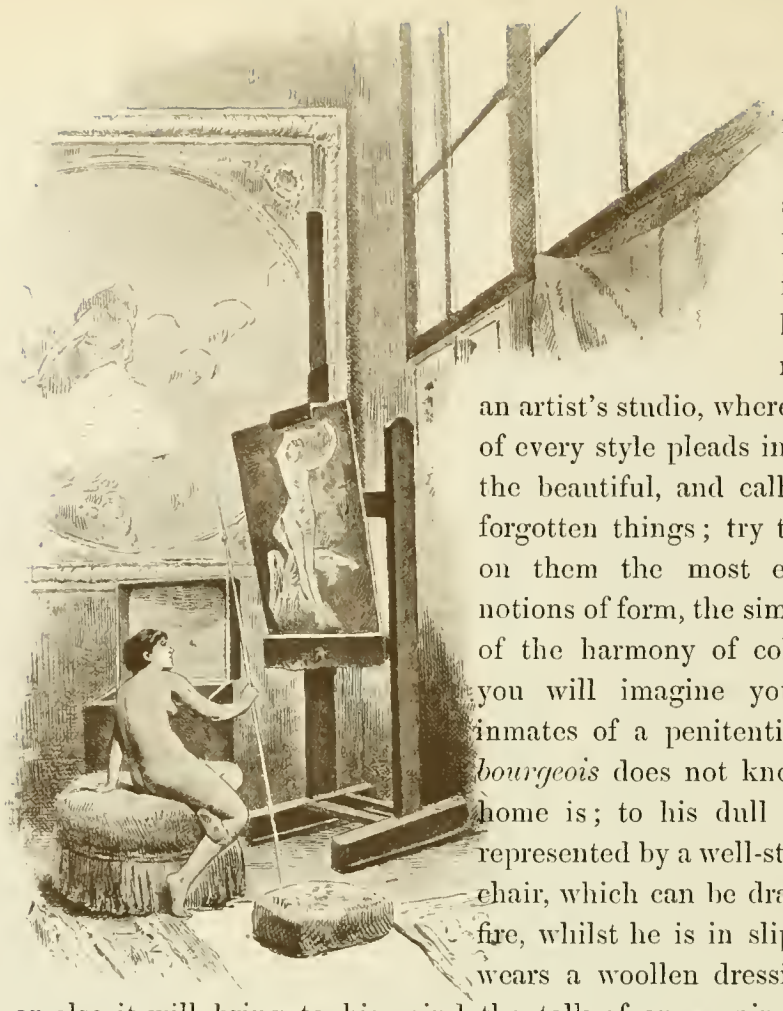
make us so luxuriate in solitude, that home becomes a sanctuary where we collect our thoughts, take refuge, and nestle almost shivering, intoxicated by our happiness, on having returned from icy out-door silliness.

The French *bourgeoisie* has at present a liking for everything that is horrible, commonplace, and vulgar; it feels attracted by the most hideous productions of our national industry; by assisting and buying them it encourages the manufacture of monstrous and ignoble furniture; it hungers after the ugly, and when it buys anything wretched, only cares that it will wear well and not fade. Brought up in the worship of mahogany, an immoderate love for rosewood and varnished *arbor vitæ*—above all, smitten with the veneer of modern furniture—it plans, when removing, homes frightfully dull and horribly vulgar, where everything that is ugly, ungainly, meagre, awkward, and grotesque, ever invented by human imagination, is collected for the greatest delectation of *bourgeois* friends.

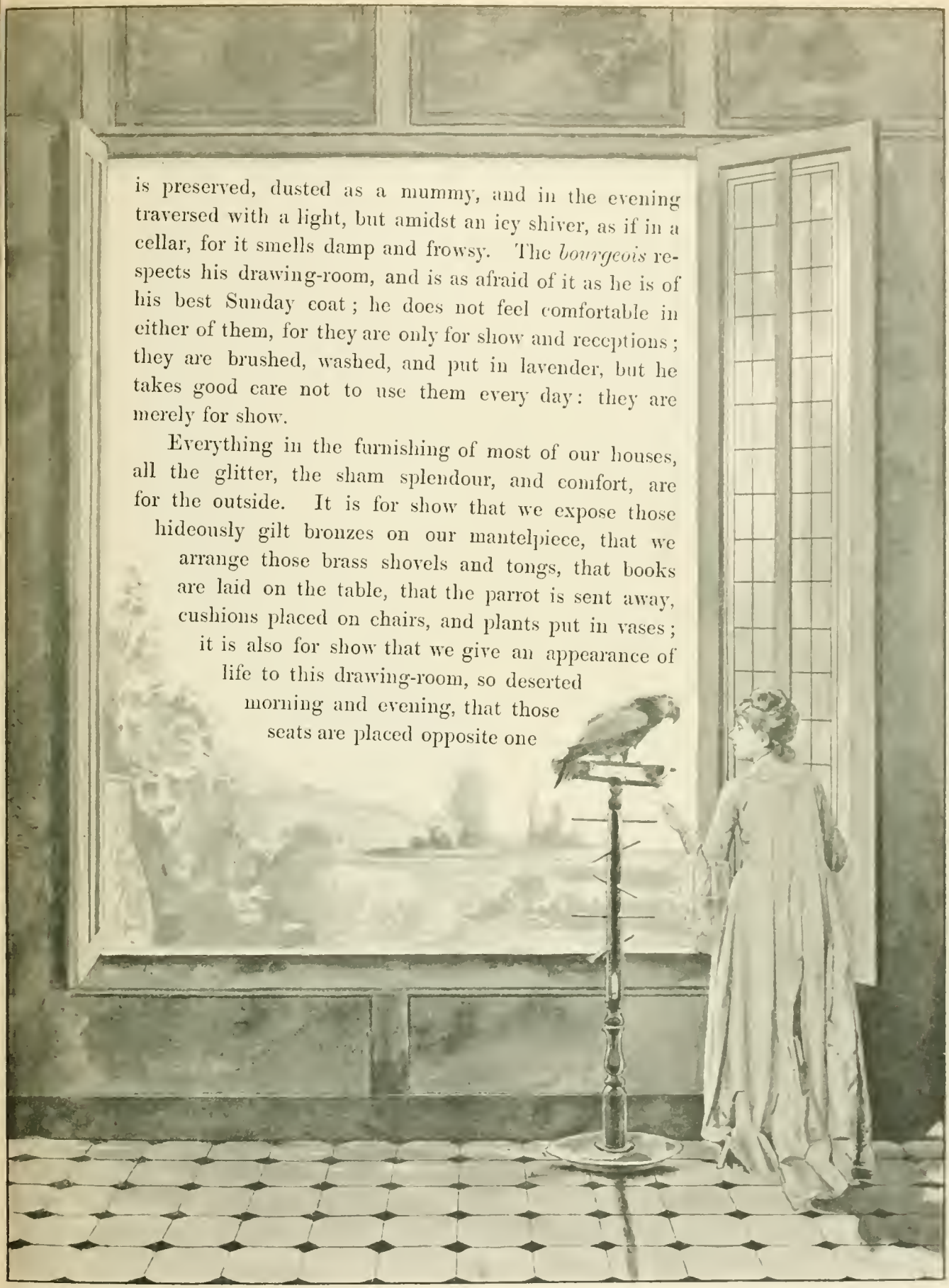


Every little grown-up *bourgeoise* is haunted by two dreams, two ambitions, two nightmares, which she always realises; the shapeless box of musical torture called a piano, and a wardrobe with looking-glasses, a pediment, foliage, and creaking doors, manufactured wholesale, and as plentifully as sand on the seashore. It is generally with such ideal furniture that she begins housekeeping.—The rest is in keeping with it.

Try and make those people, whose brains are shrivelled up by a taste for the commonplace, the vulgar, and hideous, understand the charm of a dwelling attractive to the mind and eye, hospitable and lively, amply provided with books, those invariable friends always ready to chatter, with warm hangings and bright china, lit by beautiful stained glass, which allows light to penetrate, and not stupidly shuts it out by thick muslin or lace curtains; try to



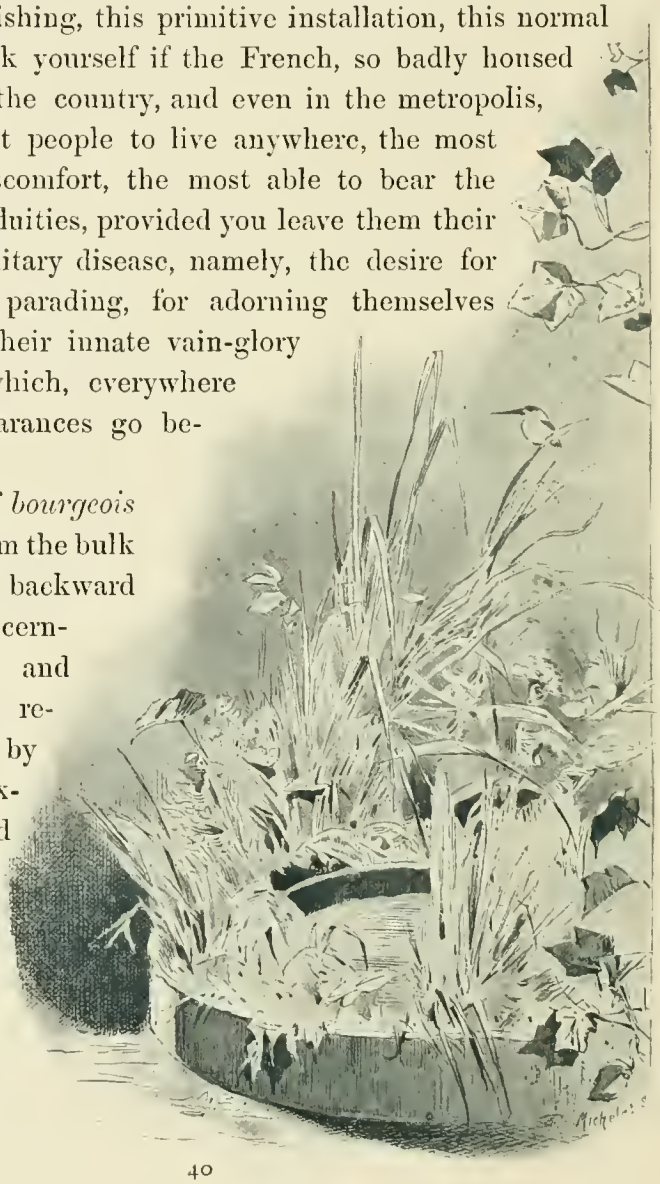
instil into those dull and vulgar heads the idea of a hall as roomy as an artist's studio, where furniture of every style pleads in favour of the beautiful, and calls up long forgotten things; try to impress on them the most elementary notions of form, the simplest laws of the harmony of colours, and you will imagine you address inmates of a penitentiary. The *bourgeois* does not know what a home is; to his dull eyes it is represented by a well-stuffed arm-chair, which can be drawn to the fire, whilst he is in slippers, and wears a woollen dressing-gown; or else it will bring to his mind the talk of an evening spent in the dining-room, with the hang-lamp lit, the coffee brought in, and when quite jovial after a good meal, he will say, "Let us remain where we are, and not go to the drawing-room."—What a mass of vulgarity, constraint, and dulness is this drawing-room, with its chairs stuck near a velvet couch covered up, its little table in the middle, laden with albums, all standing on hideous strips of flowery carpet! The drawing-room, the best apartment in the house, with its grey and gold paper on the walls, its white wainscoting, its stucco cornices, is the respected sanctuary; it is spoken of emphatically, but people dread to live and become friendly in it; it



is preserved, dusted as a mummy, and in the evening traversed with a light, but amidst an icy shiver, as if in a cellar, for it smells damp and frowsy. The *bourgeois* respects his drawing-room, and is as afraid of it as he is of his best Sunday coat; he does not feel comfortable in either of them, for they are only for show and receptions; they are brushed, washed, and put in lavender, but he takes good care not to use them every day: they are merely for show.

Everything in the furnishing of most of our houses, all the glitter, the sham splendour, and comfort, are for the outside. It is for show that we expose those hideously gilt bronzes on our mantelpiece, that we arrange those brass shovels and tongs, that books are laid on the table, that the parrot is sent away, cushions placed on chairs, and plants put in vases; it is also for show that we give an appearance of life to this drawing-room, so deserted morning and evening, that those seats are placed opposite one

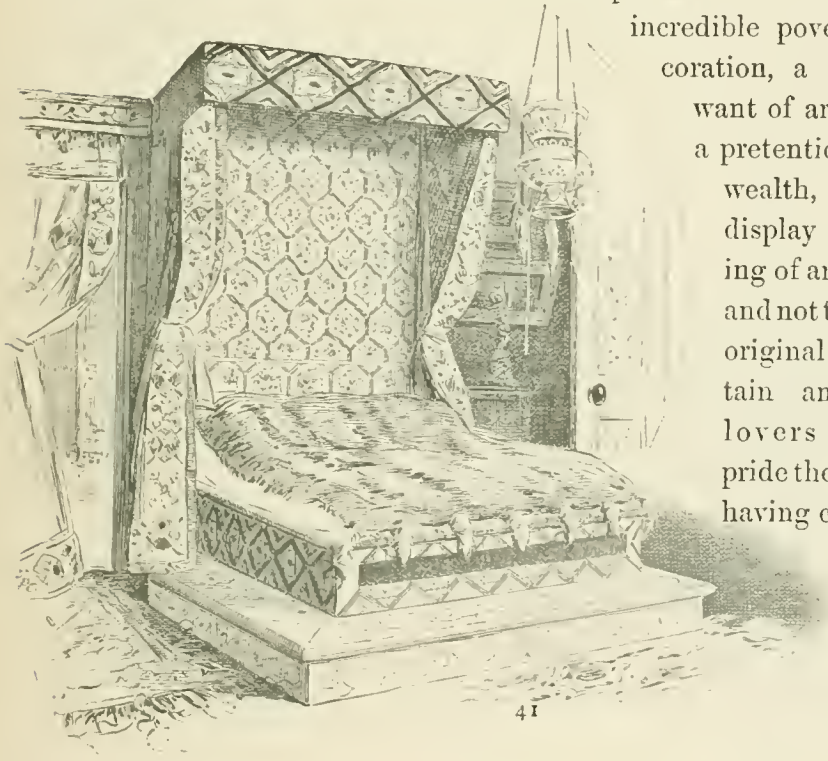
another, that the work is taken out of the work-box, that those curtains are held up by ribands, and every trifle is set out. But go and visit the old-fashioned room of the lady, and the wretched chamber of the master; glance at those scanty dressing-rooms, look at this miserable writing-table in a dark hole, observe everywhere the poor style of furnishing, this primitive installation, this normal bad taste; and ask yourself if the French, so badly housed in the provinces, the country, and even in the metropolis, are not the easiest people to live anywhere, the most accustomed to discomfort, the most able to bear the privation of superfluities, provided you leave them their hobby, their hereditary disease, namely, the desire for showing off, for parading, for adorning themselves externally in all their innate vain-glory and vanity, in which, everywhere and always, appearances go before everything.



I speak here of *bourgeois* in general, who form the bulk of the nation, very backward in everything concerning art, progress, and comfort, for they remain hypnotised by considerations of extreme economy, and the innate idea of saving every penny haunts them all. France is richer than any other nation, for it has less indivi-

dual egotism; it puts off till the morrow the care for its individuality, and unlearns the taste for spending by fakirising itself in the pleasure of saving.—In England, any man who does not put his profits into immediate circulation, in some way or other, is a bad citizen, as he does not assist directly the national prosperity. The entire diversity of home-comforts, so heterogeneous on both sides of the Channel, arises from a notion of political economy, differently understood.—As to my own ideas on this subject, though I admire and love my fellow-countrymen, I cannot refrain from bestowing all my sympathy on the pleasant English home, for I think that only in the intimacy of a well-understood domestic life existence can develop its delightful charm, just as by slowly heating some perfume in a close room we develop all its quintessence and its intoxicating aroma.

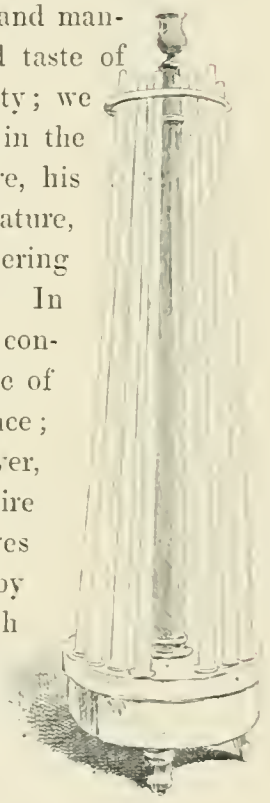
This deep-seated and enlightened taste for a modern home is so little developed in France, that we see in the houses of the best amateurs, who collect and preserve works of art, an incredible poverty of decoration, a lamentable want of arrangement, a pretentious show of wealth, but not the display of any feeling of artistic taste, and not the smallest original idea. Certain amateurs or lovers of books pride themselves on having collected in their galleries or libraries

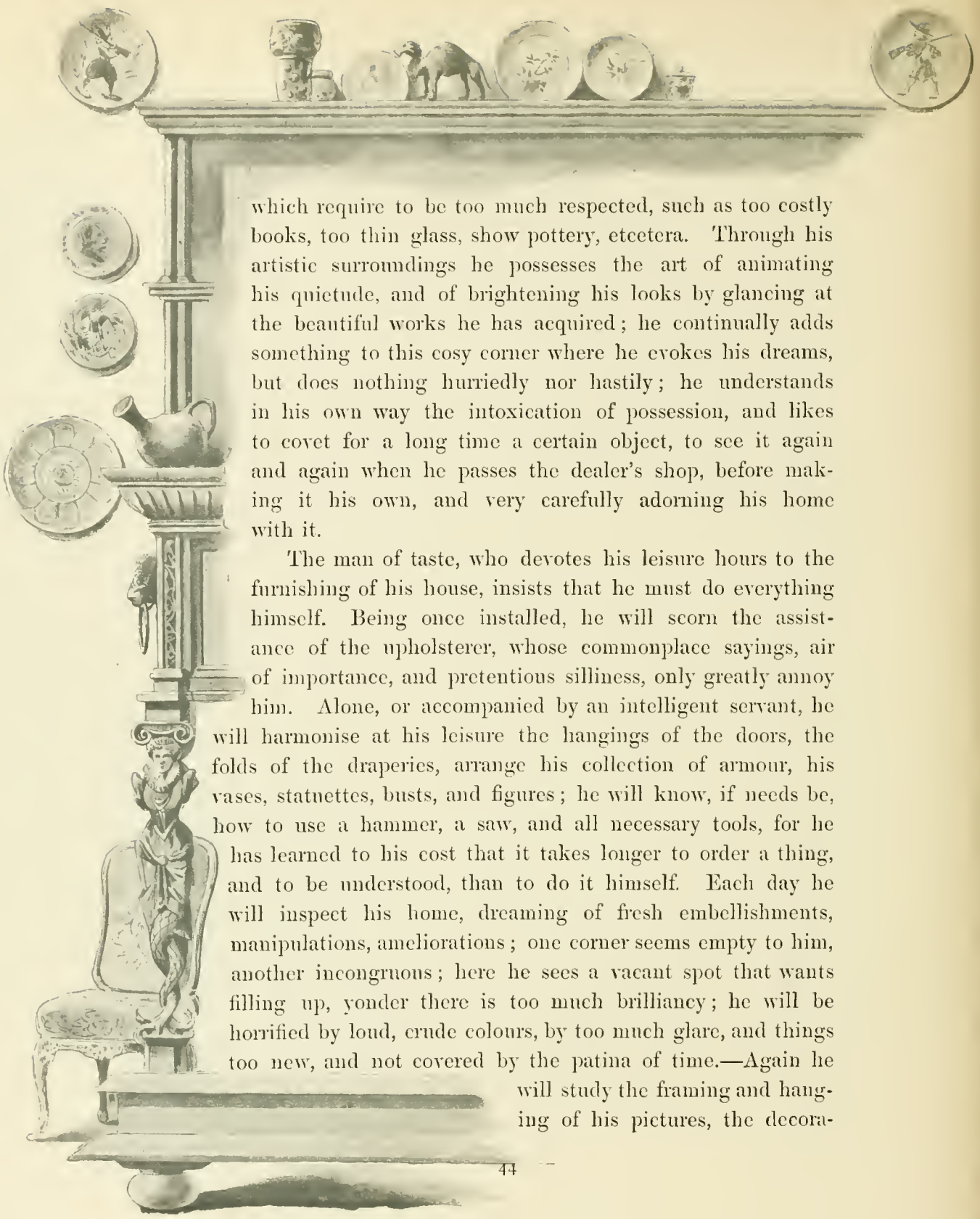


the finest pictures, furniture of the purest style, the most costly pottery, royal stuffs, or books from the most celebrated collections, and we admire indeed all these rarities, and even envy their possessors, but we feel somewhat hampered, constrained, and sad, for we are convinced that those marvels are miserably out of place amongst these *parvenus* who do not even know how to give them a frame, a setting or surrounding worthy of them.—The reason of this is that in the present plutocracy, all these Turcarets, these protectors of art, are only dealers; they mention their bargains with ostentation, and ticket them all with the price paid for them, allowing people to imagine that these objects are worth a great deal more; they show us through their galleries, uttering all the while extraordinary chrematological speeches; they have the manners of old dealers in antiquities, puffed up by sure profits, and ready for any profitable exchange. Those paunchy timocrats make us feel that they love money and hoard it; but they place before the eyes of observers and philosophers their real unsympathetic poverty and their moral impecuniosity.—Do you not perceive that you walk on superfine carpets, but most repulsive to behold? Are not those walls, ceilings, cornices, wainscotings, covered, ornamented, painted most vulgarly by the most unrefined master-builders of the present day?—Does not this chimney mantel, with its cold china and its white marble, chill more than it warms? And what shall we say of these window curtains, at so much a yard, which darken the room? What of these *portières*, those lamps manufactured wholesale, those looking-glasses crudely gilt, those gasaliers which look as if they came out of an office, and those billiard queus, and this absence of flowers and life? Does it not frighten us, and are we really visit-

ing a wealthy and epicurean collector, or a mere store-house of curiosities?

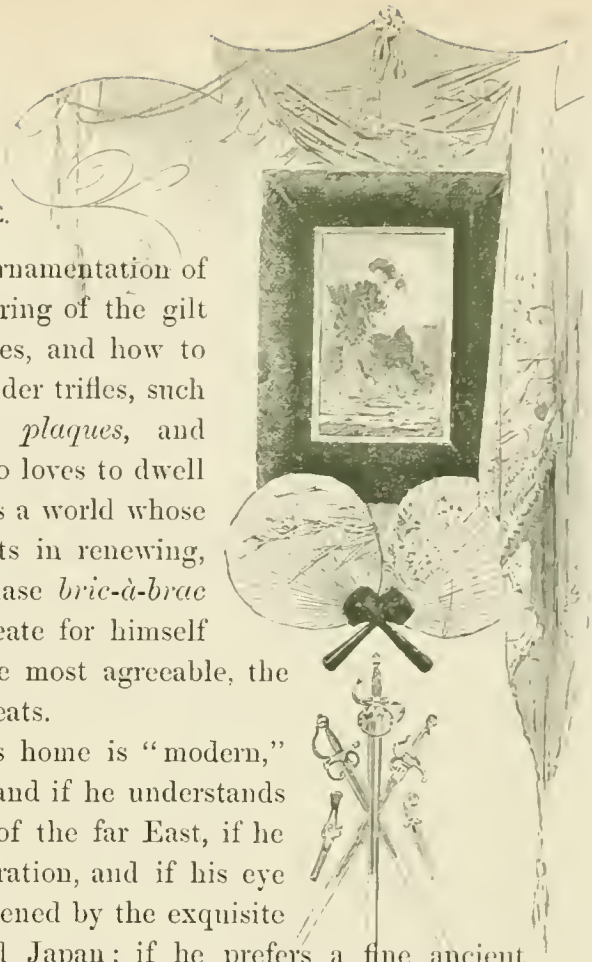
Taste cannot be bought; it springs from a feeling for the beautiful and harmony of colours. The attic of an artist or shop-girl, warm in tone, with its neat and smart-looking paper, and cheap ornaments of becoming colour, is often a thousand times more æsthetic and artistic than the richest hoard of big amateurs, without any personal taste for arrangement or adornment.—Taste is the rarest, the most imperceptible, and most personal of all things; it has its own language, its own expressions, its individual physiognomy; it reveals a character, a tendency, a special state of mind, and aids in the psychological constitution of any being. When we enter the abode of a man of a very distinct individuality, namely, with ideas sufficiently his own, and his taste not influenced by the advice of the people around him, we immediately recognise the dominant traits of his mind, disposition, and manners; this home, furnished according to the liking and taste of its master, will disclose the true expression of his entity; we will find it everywhere, even in the smallest ornaments, in the arrangement of the pictures, the variety of the furniture, his preference for certain colours; we divine his physical nature, age, and passions, so much this home, where his wandering thoughts nestle, will reveal of his mind and person. In this circle, where the whole of a man's life is spent in concentrated sensations, everything ought to reflect the state of his feelings and the most secret conditions of his existence; a gradually furnished home revealed to an intuitive observer, as Balzac was, a biography, an individual theory, an entire physio-psychological work. It is because a man who lives and thinks and is happy in his retreat, lives greatly by the things which reflect him; he adorns his cage with soft-looking and subdued colours, wishes to enjoy all he possesses, and, like Fontenelle, does not care for things





which require to be too much respected, such as too costly books, too thin glass, show pottery, etcetera. Through his artistic surroundings he possesses the art of animating his quietude, and of brightening his looks by glancing at the beautiful works he has acquired; he continually adds something to this cosy corner where he evokes his dreams, but does nothing hurriedly nor hastily; he understands in his own way the intoxication of possession, and likes to covet for a long time a certain object, to see it again and again when he passes the dealer's shop, before making it his own, and very carefully adorning his home with it.

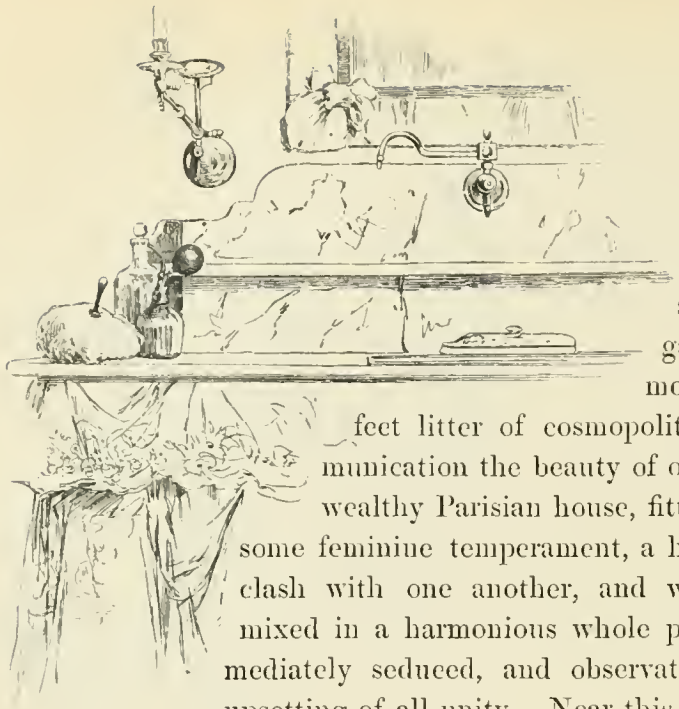
The man of taste, who devotes his leisure hours to the furnishing of his house, insists that he must do everything himself. Being once installed, he will scorn the assistance of the upholsterer, whose commonplace sayings, air of importance, and pretentious silliness, only greatly annoy him. Alone, or accompanied by an intelligent servant, he will harmonise at his leisure the hangings of the doors, the folds of the draperies, arrange his collection of armour, his vases, statuettes, busts, and figures; he will know, if needs be, how to use a hammer, a saw, and all necessary tools, for he has learned to his cost that it takes longer to order a thing, and to be understood, than to do it himself. Each day he will inspect his home, dreaming of fresh embellishments, manipulations, ameliorations; one corner seems empty to him, another incongruous; here he sees a vacant spot that wants filling up, yonder there is too much brilliancy; he will be horrified by loud, crude colours, by too much glare, and things too new, and not covered by the patina of time.—Again he will study the framing and hanging of his pictures, the decora-



tions above the doors, the ornamentation of his mantelpieces, the covering of the gilt frames of his looking-glasses, and how to conceal nails and hooks under trifles, such as small masks, ancient *plaques*, and medallions. For a man who loves to dwell between four walls, home is a world whose appearance he often delights in renewing, and as it is easy to purchase *bric-à-brac* in large towns, he can create for himself the most characteristic, the most agreeable, the liveliest, and cosiest of retreats.

If a man who likes his home is "modern," to use the slang of artists, and if he understands and worships the marvels of the far East, if he belongs to the rising generation, and if his eye has become delicately chastened by the exquisite taste of China, India, and Japan; if he prefers a fine ancient *Kakemone* to any second-rate picture, and old china to European ware; if, in short, he takes a delight in handling those Indian tissues, so cloudy and supple that they seem to melt in the hand, and becomes intoxicated by touching them; if he is mad with Japanese articles, he may plan an arrangement of his home in a manner as astonishing, sparkling, and brilliant as the art of primitive people, and deck the cold walls of his abode with imaginative fairy dreams on silk, with ingenious paradoxes on satin, leathern arabesques, fancies, and phantasmagories, embroidered by the most wonderful artists and the cleverest artisans who ever appeared in this world.

Orientialism gives an exquisite originality to many Parisian dwellings, and when we reflect that the decorative art of the nineteenth century has no style properly so-called, we begin to imagine that the true style of the present time is perhaps merely



this massing of so many opposite styles; so that, in certain elegant dwellings, we meet, in the most happy confusion, with a perfect litter of cosmopolitan art, which brings into communication the beauty of opposite poles. Observe, in some wealthy Parisian house, fitted up like a nest, by degrees, by some feminine temperament, a heap of furniture which ought to clash with one another, and which, however, is grouped and mixed in a harmonious whole pleasant to the eye. We are immediately seduced, and observation permits us to analyse this upsetting of all unity. Near this chest of the Middle Ages we see a cabinet of the Italian Renaissance, on which are some Oriental armour, and grinning Japanese masks; further on, next to this Flemish piece of furniture, stands a Spanish pier-table of the sixteenth century, leaning against a *portière* of Hungarian lace; our feet rest on a Persian carpet; the ceiling is decorated with Japanese draperies, with golden dragons; the mantelpiece is crowded with Delft-ware, the windows are of old-stained Nuremberg glass; moreover, to the right and left are Chinese grotesque figures, French silks of the eighteenth century, Genoa velvet, Venetian leather, armchairs by Brustolone, candlesticks by Gouttière; all this completely and perfectly harmonises, forming a very comfortable and agreeable whole, to which Parisian plants and flowers add the brilliancy of their verdure and colours. It is madness, but a madness which we share, and which does not allow us to protest. It is a bazaar, a shop of a dealer of antiquities, if you like; but it is in conformity with our actual æstheticism, which is a mosaic of the most varied ideas, and of the most superficial admirations.

If no account were taken of the labours of professional people, of the critics of academical art, and of the hangers-on of the various ministries, a very interesting work might be written on the

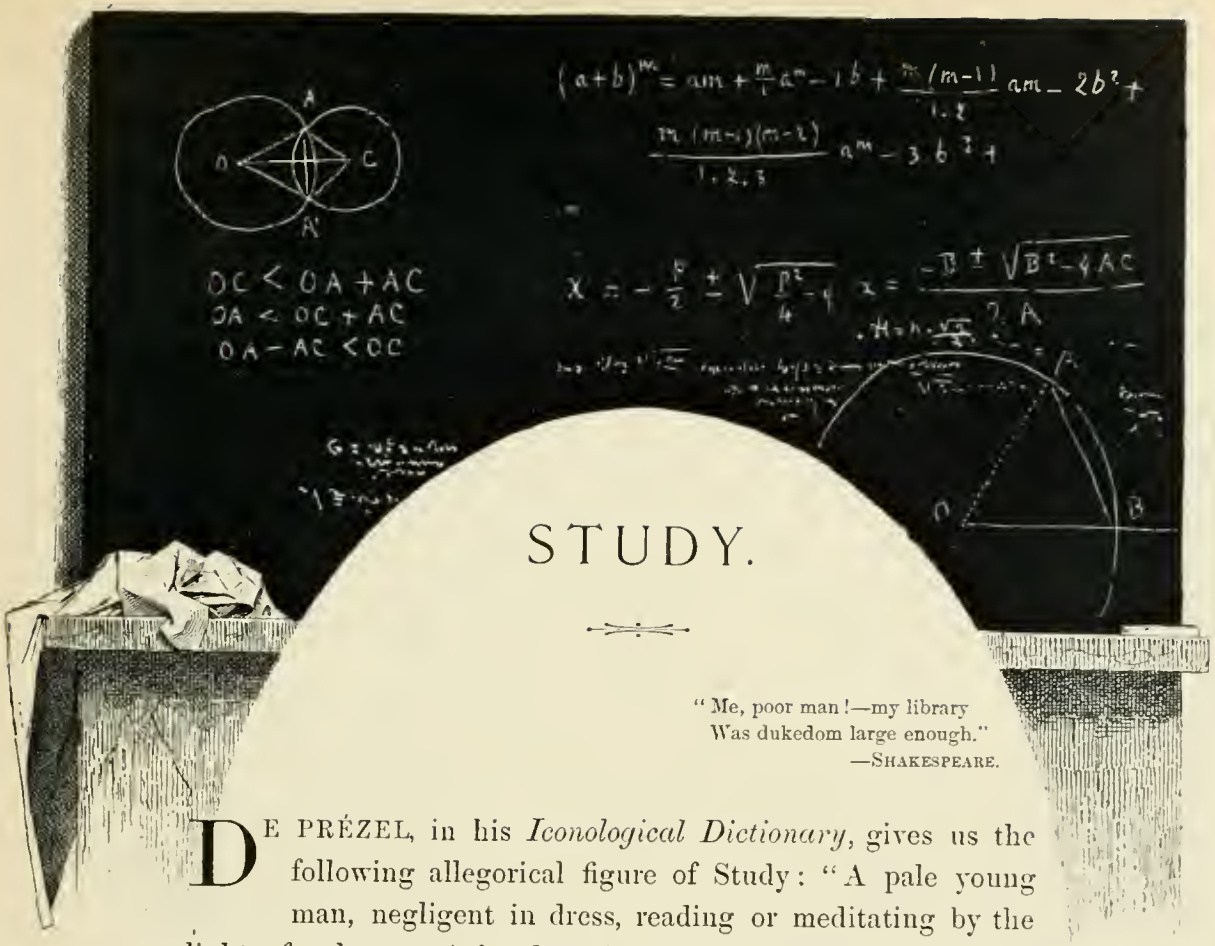
modern home, with all its details, and in its general aspect, an original and heterodox book, full of truth and fantasy. I should like to see an independent mind get enamoured of this idea, and treat it without any regard for the opinion of all these schoolmasters who pretend to rule over modern furniture, with the delightful assistance of the *bourgeois* officials, who preside over the administration of hideous, contemporary art. Unfortunately only formal and silly judges, professors of industrial art, pedantic nincompoops, and numskulls of commonplace phraseology, trouble themselves to publish indigestible works on a subject which only depends on taste, and mercilessly breaks through all the rules and lines of these logical friends of diagrams. Architects, pretentious art practitioners, licensed teachers of the so-called School of Art, should not write such a work about the original ways and means of decking-out and adorning our home. An observer, with a light and picturesque style, well acquainted with the harmony of colours and draperies, would be the right man for this, for he could introduce into his ornamental style his charming phraseology, his alluring diction, his truly original ideas about everything that can enhance our present taste in furniture, and brighten up our cold combinations of upholstery and cabinet work.

His work would be useful, for instead of frightening us by its dogmatic pretensions, he would allure us by a glimpse at fanciful things; he would not lay down fixed rules, but gradually allow his readers to assimilate his taste without becoming obtrusive.

He would, above all, defend this theory, that what is beautiful is not always costly and rare, and that ordinary draperies and chairs, the simplest chests, the most quiet hangings, can, by being arranged and decorated with mere trifles, become astonishing objects of value and taste, and present to our eyes the most perfect harmony.

Let us wait for the appearance of this typical book.

Study



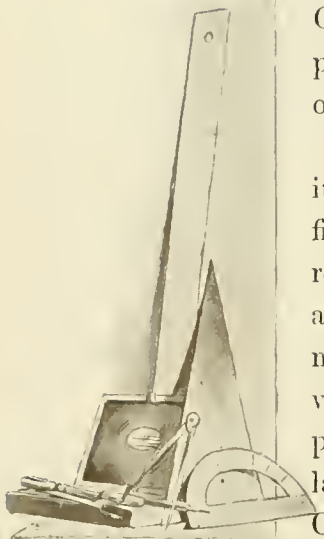
STUDY.

"Me, poor man!—my library
Was dukedom large enough."
—SHAKESPEARE.

DE PRÉZEL, in his *Iconological Dictionary*, gives us the following allegorical figure of Study: "A pale young man, negligent in dress, reading or meditating by the light of a lamp. A bandage is over his mouth to let us understand that a studious man loves silence and solitude. A cock, the symbol of vigilance, is his usual emblem."—I do not know from what picture, bas-relief or print, De Prézel has copied this rather clever description; I think it is wholly imaginative, but study has inspired so many allegories, that this last and essentially romantic one deserves to be mentioned.

The eighteenth century, in particular, has symbolised Study under many different forms, and the artist's skill seems to have exhausted itself in the frontispieces and head and tail pieces of many delightful works, which made pleasant even the outside of dry lectures. Generally the artists of the last century depicted Study as a woman with a pensive air, looking towards the clouds where Cupids appear and carry all the mathematical and scientific

instruments then invented, whilst in the foreground books tumble down in disorder, as if tired of being consulted. Time, with his fluvial beard, seems delayed in its flight, and its scythe is covered with flowers which the charms of Study have suddenly caused to spring up on the murderous blade. Vanloo, Boucher, Eisen, Gravelot, Monnet, Marillier, Dubourg have each treated this subject, either in *grisaille* above doors, or in compositions which the engravers of that time have popularised. Greuze himself has painted a symbolical picture of Study, formerly in the San-Donato Gallery, representing a young child with anxious mien, with a pair of compasses in his hand, who seems to seek the solution of a problem.



If study is the safeguard of youth, as some wiseacre has said, it is also the warm and sheltering retreat of old age; and Gœthe's fiction of Faust reveals to us in its German metaphysical fog its real myth, which is rejuvenescence, for study provides us with an inextinguishable flame, and instils in us an ardour for ever renewed by the curiosity it feeds on. To whatever researches a man's vocation leads him, whether he busies himself with rhetorics, logic, philosophy, physics, astronomy, history or chronology, canonical law or theology, geography or medicine, whether he studies, like Cuvier, the antediluvian world, describes the mysteries of conchology, of lepidopters, or moths, he who devotes his life exclusively to work dwells with happiness.—Study gives to the student a thirst for knowledge, which eternally reinvigorates the mind; it lets fall on those who love it fervently a salutary and preserving dew, which withdraws them from the grim harshness of external life; it enlarges their horizon by the radiant perspective of discoveries; it concentrates their sensations into one ruling passion, and creates, so to say, a paradise for our weak humanity; for, always unknown, it shows itself with fresh charms whenever and under whatever form we wish to behold it. In history, it reveals

to us the ethnology of nations; in morals, man as he is; in entomology, it initiates us in the worship of mysterious nature, whilst philosophy makes us indulgent, and draws us nearer to God.

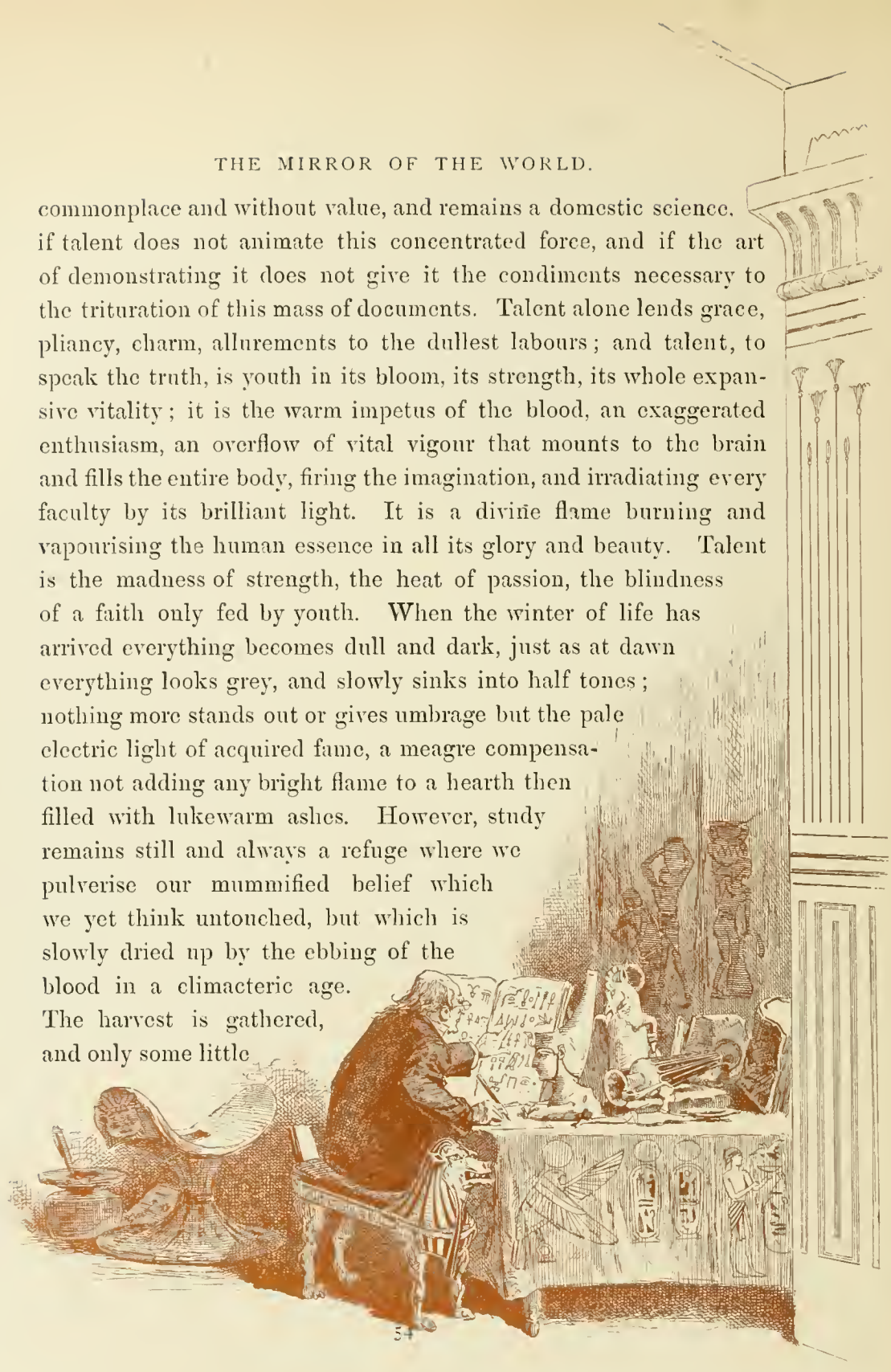
The honest and academical Viennet has left us in the following distich, in prosaic verse, a paraphrase of an old Pythagorean saying:—

> "What makes life dear is study, to us sent
> As a ne'er changing pleasure without end."

Study is the indispensable gymnastics of the mind; it takes off its rust, polishes, educates, softens, sways and assists it in dispelling the troubles of the heart and the tempests of reasoning. Euler says: "The kind of study to which each man devotes himself has so great an influence on his manner of thinking that the experimentaliser only demands experiments, and the reasoner reasonings."—Study leads us to logic, and to the discipline and science of reducing our vague thoughts and idle reasonings to certain rules, so that they can be shaped into *modes* and *figures*, as our fathers used to say.

However, study, which only leads to mere erudition, means very little.—To be learned is within reach of the first being gifted with patience, will, memory, and an ordinary intelligence; a scientist, an archivist, an archæologist, an assyriologist are made as a soldier is made, by daily and persevering drill, by cultivating the same lobes of the brain. Erudition is only

commonplace and without value, and remains a domestic science, if talent does not animate this concentrated force, and if the art of demonstrating it does not give it the condiments necessary to the trituration of this mass of documents. Talent alone lends grace, pliancy, charm, allurements to the dullest labours; and talent, to speak the truth, is youth in its bloom, its strength, its whole expansive vitality; it is the warm impetus of the blood, an exaggerated enthusiasm, an overflow of vital vigour that mounts to the brain and fills the entire body, firing the imagination, and irradiating every faculty by its brilliant light. It is a divine flame burning and vapourising the human essence in all its glory and beauty. Talent is the madness of strength, the heat of passion, the blindness of a faith only fed by youth. When the winter of life has arrived everything becomes dull and dark, just as at dawn everything looks grey, and slowly sinks into half tones; nothing more stands out or gives umbrage but the pale electric light of acquired fame, a meagre compensation not adding any bright flame to a hearth then filled with lukewarm ashes. However, study remains still and always a refuge where we pulverise our mummified belief which we yet think untouched, but which is slowly dried up by the ebbing of the blood in a climacteric age. The harvest is gathered, and only some little



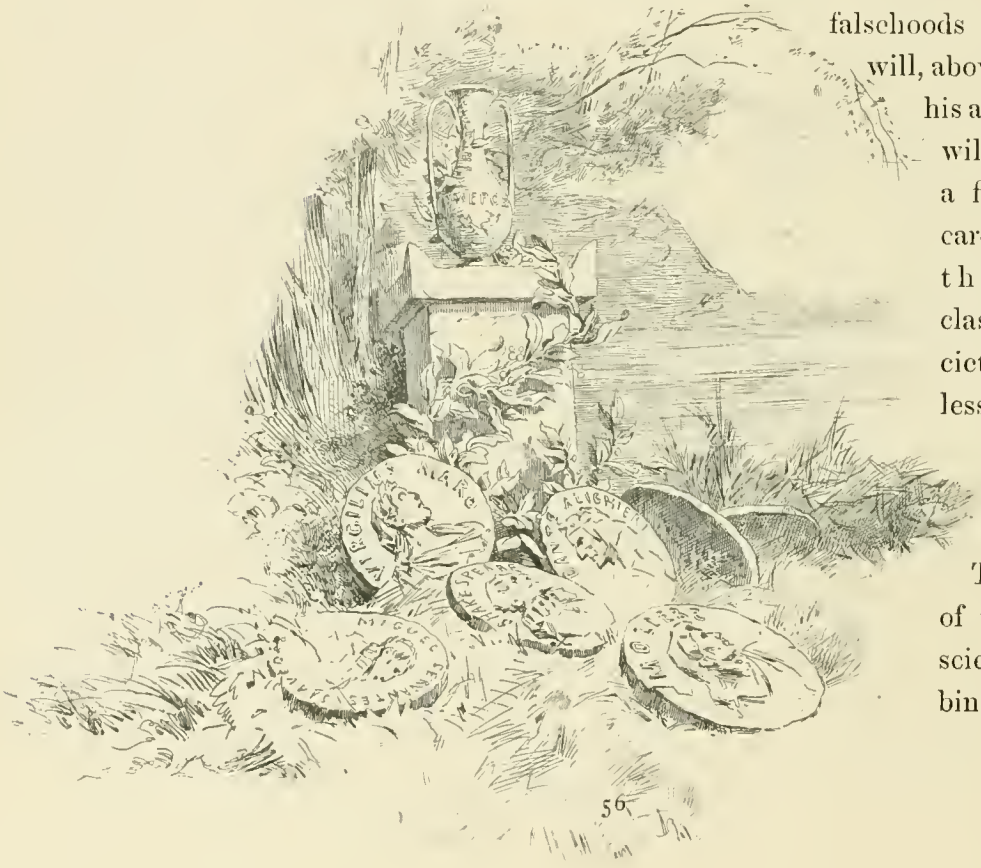
branches remain which still delude their possessors. But the mind of the writer does not carry away, as of yore, the mind of the reader; it only gives vent to repetitions; it is the hour of severe and cold studies, of abstraction, and no longer a time for those serene intuitions which are the genius of youth.

The noblest quality of mere erudition is its love for truth, but this love for truth is only ridiculous when it attacks genius. What does it matter if Shakespeare has committed thousands of anachronisms, if Voltaire has perverted history, and if Hugo quotes texts which do not exist? Does the fire of their genius not purify those miserable errors, and will the truth of beautiful legends not always appear more startling, more in conformity with our ideal belief, than the truth verified by fastidious and pedantic historians?—Half of what Calderon and Molière wrote can be found in Bandello, Geraldi Cintio, and Lasca, but that half is made up chiefly of materials, and genius kills so entirely those it robs, that only the silliness and low envy of erudite and finnikin jackals dare to dig up those bodies and open an inquest for posterity.

Certain studies belong to the gerocomy for workers; we can hardly think of paleography as a juvenile passion; and, though many young and ardent men have abandoned themselves to the search for hieratic writings, to the analysis of hieroglyphics and anaglyphics, we can scarcely imagine an Egyptologist, except with the venerable aspect of an ancient Hierogrammatist, grown old amidst the slow study of pillars, Egyptian vases, and Isiac mysteries. Those patient studies seem hardly to suit youth, who should be in front, or in the midst of struggle for new ideas, original the forms, style, and colour. When a graduate has just bid farewell to admiration, to order, to the study

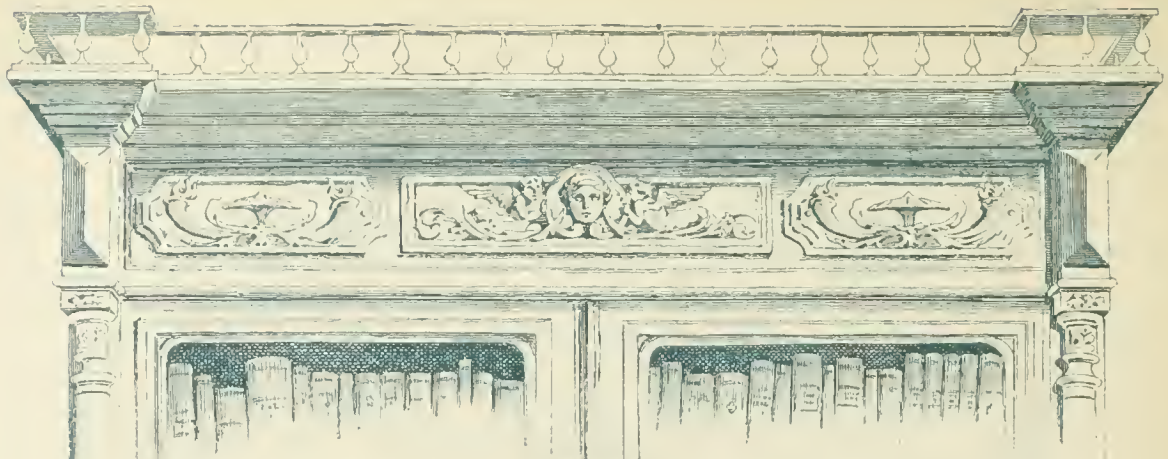
of the classical dialogues of the dead, and the vague ideas crammed into him at the university, after an indigestion of Homer, Virgil, Dante, Molière, and the hygienic promenades in Attic literature, his mind needs fresh air, pants for independence, and wants to know itself; he feels a dislike for the lumber of dead languages, and is anxious to learn something of those unknown living tongues which seem sweet to him, and not as bitter as those compulsory draughts which until now he has been obliged to swallow; he has an idea of the complete uncertainty of sciences in general, and nature offers too many inexhaustible treasures, resources and attractions, for him to think of plunging into the learned ignorance of the short-sighted reconstructors of past ages.

He will, therefore, launch out into art, literature, jurisprudence, geography, now so enticing, into military studies which hold out so many promises of glory, or into physiological sciences. The falsehoods of medicine will, above all, attract his attention; he will find there a flourishing career, because the upper classes of society are restless, nervous, and generally unhinged.



This study of the medical sciences combined with the

materialistic philosophy of the day attracts studious and ambitious minds. Medicine, however, only exists by uncertainty, hesitation, and boldness; it follows the fashions, and this causes it continually to deviate from its regular researches, whilst quackery, as in all other sciences, makes there more adepts than the severe and modest authority of real masters. Hippocrates' dogmatism is abandoned for a vague, modern eclecticism, which leads to a very superficial diagnosis, and to therapeutics wholly based on many prescriptions; moreover, doctors are injudiciously smitten with every new method, but then they reject them after having tried them on numberless victims. To the Tower of Babel of medicine is added every day a story through the confusion of its tongues and systems, struggling against common-sense and nature. We have had, in turns, the Hippocratic, Galenic, active and expectant, curative and prophylactic, methodical and empirical, animistic and materialistic, hermetic and metallotherapeutic medicine, without reckoning polypharmaceutic medicine, generally followed, and the most destructive. When we consider calmly the various methods of this heartrending concourse of legal murders, mostly conceived without any ætiology, we are dismayed, and turn away from the doctors as frightened as if they were assassins of former times; we ask ourselves, not without feeling a great contempt for mankind, how, amidst ideas so imperfect and uncertain that as yet



they have not been able to penetrate the mysteries of the human body, certain beings can be found, indifferent or bold enough to dare, thoughtlessly to go from theory to practice, and to pretend to exercise an art in which they are not certain of acting in concert with nature. It is right to add that Holy Writ tells us, *Honora medicum propter necessitatem;* and that Ecclesiasticus also charitably warns us against executioners by prophesying that, *He that sinneth in the sight of his Maker shall fall into the hands of the physician.* But the Bible is no longer sufficiently read. It contains all wisdom and philosophy, and clearly shows that medical science has only come into the world to punish criminals—namely, idlers guilty of high treason against creation, and those rash and proud people who, by overworking their bodies, and by forgetting the laws of vital equilibrium, guiltily outrage human faculties. Guillotin was perhaps the only physician courageous enough openly to avow his divine mandate by inventing the ingenious machine, named after him, and with which, later on, sad and renowned, he became inseparably connected.

Study by itself cures better than any medicine. Osimandias judiciously called his library *The pharmacy of the mind,* and it is indeed in books that we find the best remedy for the vanities of the world. The intercourse with books turns us pleasantly away from a too frequent and saddening intercourse with the living, and accustoms us gradually to that of the dead; I mean those glorious immortals who have left us the quintessence of their

noblest thoughts. Plautus, after a life full of troubles and adversities, replied one day to some one who asked him what amusement had soothed and satisfied him most :—

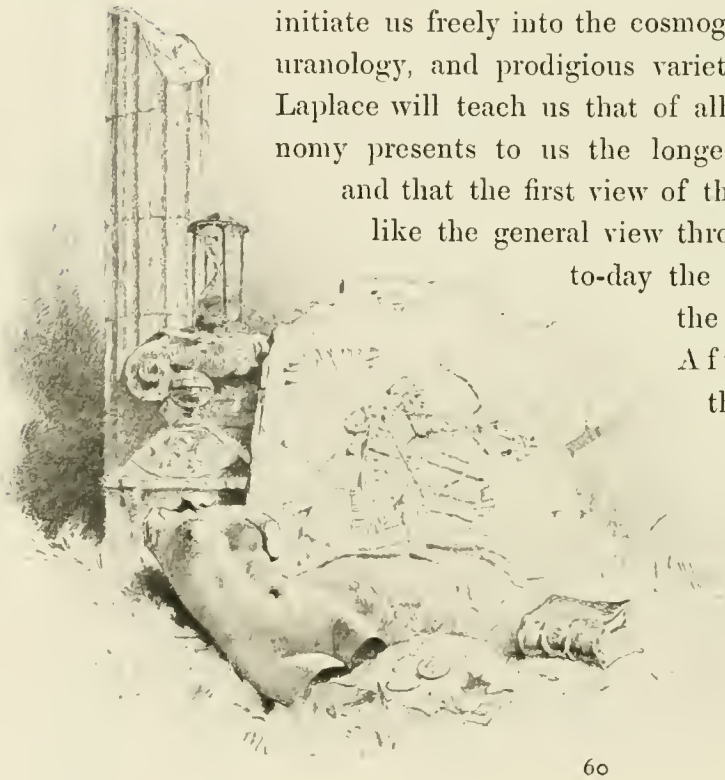
"There exists no position which a man does not wish to change, no post of honour without danger, no riches without work and uneasiness, no prosperity lasting for ever, no pleasure of which he does not tire ; therefore, if ever I have been soothed and tranquillised, it is since I have entirely devoted myself to reading."

Reading, not by fits and starts, but healthy and absorbing, frees us from all the agitations and unpleasantness of external life ; it keeps alive in our mind a focus of light which creates for it a fictitious existence a thousand times superior to the real one. It makes us travel like the young gods of antiquity on the clouds of illusion, in fantastic countries wholly peopled by poetic sensations, so much the more beautiful and persuasive as they are more vague ; it creates for us refined intellectual sympathies which no treason can destroy and no hypocrisy can poison.

Books are so many faithful and serviceable friends, gently teaching us everything through their persuasive and wise experience ; the solid conversation of many authors who have disappeared is wholly made up of amenity, wit, humour, belief, and without the vivacity, bitterness, and cowardice which sometimes make the conversation of the living so odious ; they are complaisant guides whom we abandon at our leisure, and take up again when tired. If we wish to revive antiquity, see again with the eyes of our imagination Rome, Carthage, Ninive, Byzan-

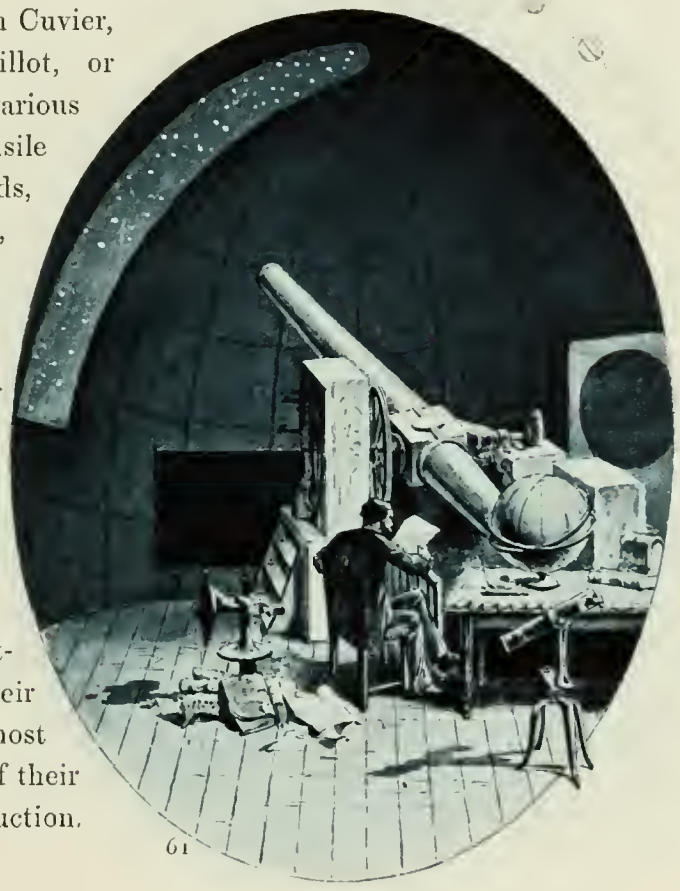
tium, Memphis, or Babylon, and sum up all the art treasures of those annihilated nations, books, without our paying too much for them, will lead us from our fireside into the midst of the oldest civilisations. If we are thinking of our salvation, the Fathers of the Church will present themselves to us, without pomp or pride, to purify our soul.

If we wish to learn astronomy and the mysteries of the Heavens, count the planets and give a name to those thousands of luminous spots constellating the firmament, know everything that is to be known about the celestial bodies, their movements, distribution in space, physical shape, and, in short, understand the complicated mechanism of astrostatics, a hundred astronomers, Galileo, Kepler, Laplace, Newton, Halley, Lacaille, Lalande, Herschel, Delambre, Arago, and others, will initiate us freely into the cosmogony, latitude, longitude, uranology, and prodigious variety of the planisphere.—Laplace will teach us that of all natural sciences astronomy presents to us the longest chain of discoveries, and that the first view of the Heavens is not at all like the general view through which we embrace to-day the past and the future of the system of the world. After having reached through study the knowledge of the zenith, we imagine, with Fontenelle, that the labours of the astronomers have given us eyes, and that, without them, we should ignore the pro-



digious magnificence of this world almost only inhabited by blind people.

If the curiosities of nature tempt us, and if, amidst the delight of rustic solitude, we wish to enliven the monotonous charms of contemplative life by studying plants and birds, and thus introduce into our love for the country more observation, interest, rational passion, our dear friends, books, will again come to us, take a small place in our verdant retreat, and permit us to analyse the lives and manners of the organised beings surrounding us. Monographies or ornithological *faunæ* will attract our attention to all those graceful birds worshipped by the Egyptians, and we will be delighted to study with Cuvier, Saint-Hilaire, Vieillot, or Temminck, the various characters of prehensile and pigeon-like birds, of raptores, climbers, passerines, gallinaceans, corriras, waders, and palmipeds, which, henceforth, cease to be in our eyes merely ornamental beings, to make us dote on them, whilst investigating the rapidity of their movements, or the most minute particulars of their manners and reproduction.



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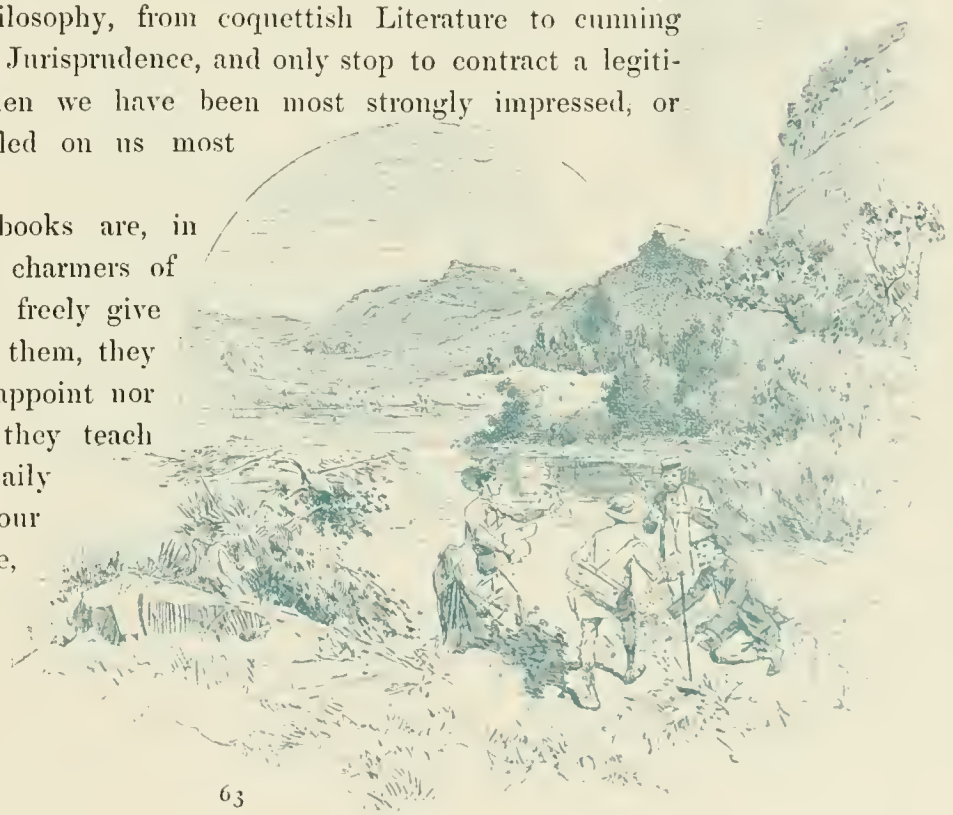
The mere study of botany would even suffice to create for us unforeseen resources, and make us enjoy life in the loneliest desert.—Botany is not, as Rousseau thought, an amusement for an idle and lazy hermit, or the art of insulting plants in Greek, as a philosophic gardener said it was; it is a taste continually increasing, which makes us affable; a taste sometimes useful for the vegetarian, for botanophily often leads to botanophagy; and I know lovers of vegetable organogeny who have gradually succeeded in making everything eatable, and often treat their friends, not only with charming and exquisite amenity, but also to new and extraordinary dishes, such as stewed dahlia-bulbs, nettles, or early cowslips' soup.—But this hobby belongs almost to agricultural physiology. The study of botany would lead us to grant to plants a kind of life which, according to Aristotle, the founder of the sciences of observation, would place them in the scale of beings between inanimate bodies and animals, and would recognise between them no other difference but their secretions which smell nicely, and their want of senses which does not permit them to take cognisance of external bodies nor of themselves.

Botany, on the other hand, possesses this incomparable advantage, of exercising at the same time our intellectual and physical faculties, and of withdrawing us from the sedentary habits of ordinary studies to let us undertake erratic and healthy walks across plains, valleys, and mountains. Its followers travel from north to south, under every meridian, for it takes in the entire world by the geography of its infinitely varied *flora;* it leads them

to the high table-lands of the New World, on the borders of immense lakes, to the bottom of profound valleys, always in quest of details and the unknown. More than any other science it brings man to nature, which reveals itself to him, and inspires him with a taste for the simple, natural, and beautiful, for everything in the Universe is beautiful, and the smallest leaf is an incomparable masterpiece of God.

Every study to which our moral instinct inclines us is beneficent and regenerating; it procures to our intellect many varied but agreeable forms, as well as most extraordinary moods; we should, therefore, allow every science and sentiment to enter our mind; and if they do not enter pell-mell, there is plenty of room. We should avoid indigestion and congestion, by well regulating our labours, court sciences as we do women, separately, and whilst fickle remain always true to curiosity, pass from tragic History to valuable Philosophy, from coquettish Literature to cunning and treacherous Jurisprudence, and only stop to contract a legitimate union when we have been most strongly impressed, or the future smiled on us most temptingly.



Study and books are, in short, the great charmers of this life. If we freely give ourselves up to them, they will neither disappoint nor grieve us, for they teach us modesty by daily convincing us of our infinite ignorance, and by always leaving in us a desire for

fresh knowledge. There is one book which never tires a refined mind—*ourselves*—the study of which is enough for a lifetime, if we bring to it a humility needed for the examination of our entire moral being.—Montaigne used to say: "I like better to create my mind than to furnish it; there is no feebler or more arduous occupation than to keep up our thoughts: *Quibus vivere est cogitare.*"

Love

LOVE.

"Love is the architect of the Universe."—HESIOD.

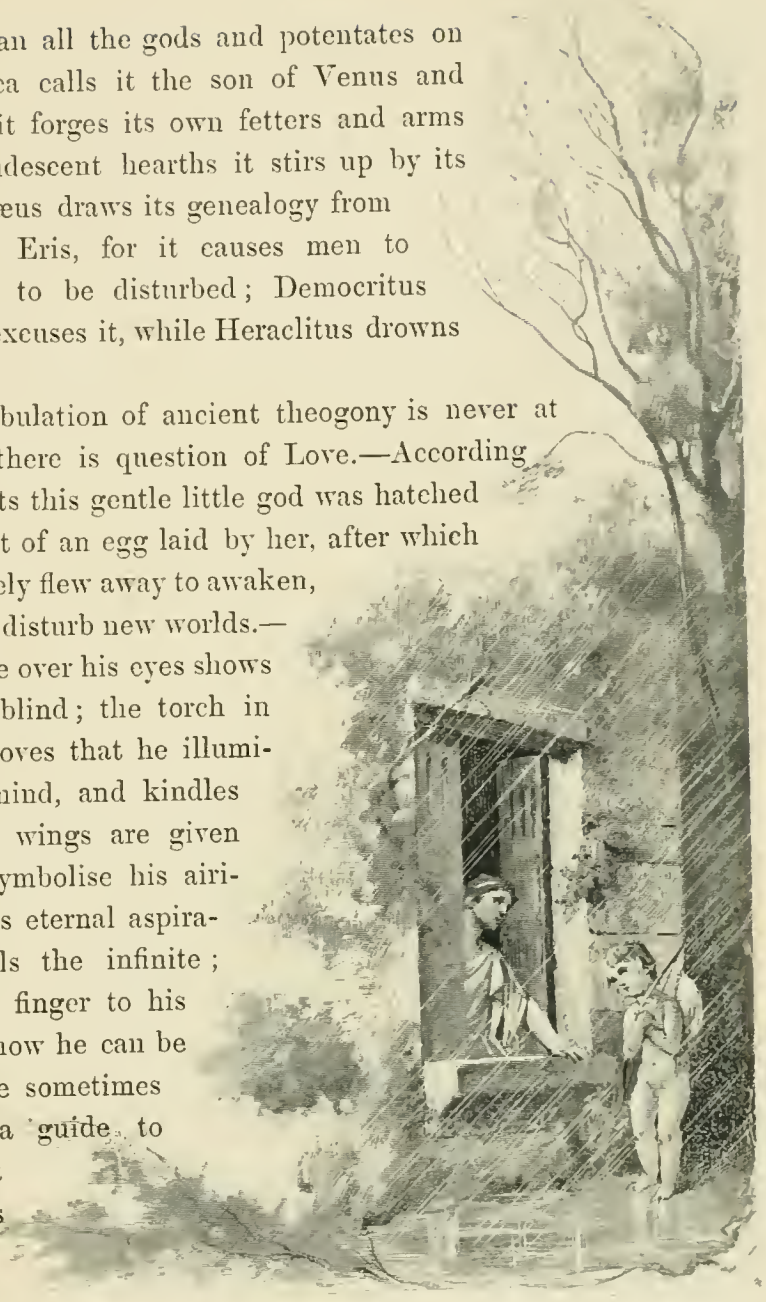
FROM the most remote Antiquity, from the pretty legend of the Cytherean Venus, who was no other than the Egyptian Nephtis or the wife of Typhon, from the ages of paganism, Buddhism, and idolatry, until modern times, amidst all nations, through the entire hierography of disappeared civilisations, the more we study, search, consider, investigate the philosophy of facts, the more it seems we can affirm that the history of love has always been the history of the human race.—We must believe with Nodier, that gentle story-teller and philologist, that the world had its origin in a marvellous paradise, decked out by the hands of the Creator, to serve as a nuptial palace for humanity, and that all nature, young, virginal, and flowery, was the enchanted cradle of first love.

After having deposited into the plants an organic phenomenon, into the brute creation instinct, and into the heart of man sentiment, the Divine Spirit invited its creatures to increase and multiply, and Heaven beheld then the sudden vibration of beings issuing into life and existence, seeking each other mysteriously, in order to meet, join, transubstantiate, and unite themselves theandrically in their essence amidst a sudden and disturbing convulsion to obey the commands of God.—Such might be a summary of our Christian Genesis.

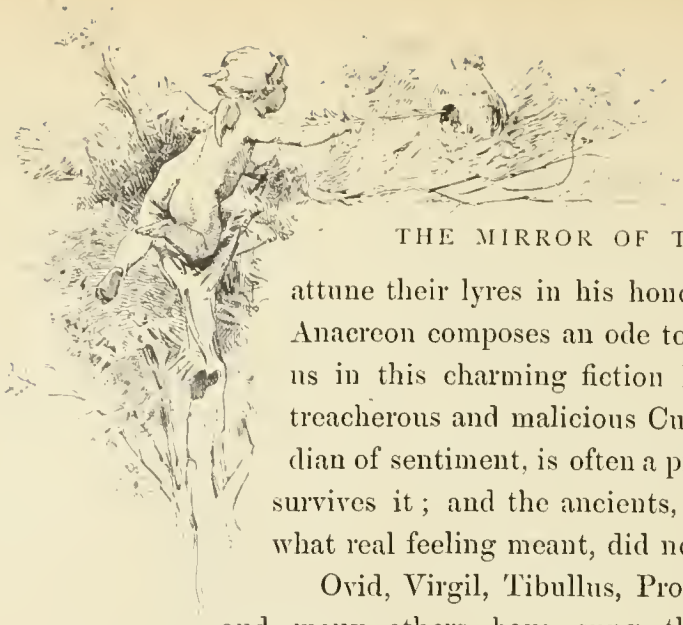
The pagan legend relates the birth of mythological Love in a hundred varied and ingenious ways.—According to Simonides, it sprung from the kisses Mars gave to Venus; Alcmeon ascribes its birth to Flora and Zephyr; Hesiod makes it rise from chaos, bringing into the world troubles and devastation; Plato considers it a child of Poverty and Riches, for it often moves us by its trembling, and continually holds out his hand, whilst at other times it seems

wealthier than all the gods and potentates on earth; Seneca calls it the son of Venus and Vulcan, for it forges its own fetters and arms at the incandescent hearths it stirs up by its breath; Alcæus draws its genealogy from Zephyr and Eris, for it causes men to quarrel and to be disturbed; Democritus laughs and excuses it, while Heraclitus drowns it in tears.

The affabulation of ancient theogony is never at fault when there is question of Love.—According to some poets this gentle little god was hatched by Night out of an egg laid by her, after which it immediately flew away to awaken, rejoice, and disturb new worlds.—The bandage over his eyes shows that he is blind; the torch in his hand proves that he illuminates our mind, and kindles our senses; wings are given to him to symbolise his airiness and his eternal aspiration towards the infinite; he puts his finger to his mouth to show he can be discreet; he sometimes serves as a guide to fortune; at other times he leads folly.



All poets



attune their lyres in his honour. The amiable and jovial Anacreon composes an ode to *Love in the Rain*, and shows us in this charming fiction Pity opening the door to the treacherous and malicious Cupid, for Pity, the vestal guardian of sentiment, is often a prelude to love, and not seldom survives it; and the ancients, who, however, scarcely knew what real feeling meant, did not ignore this.

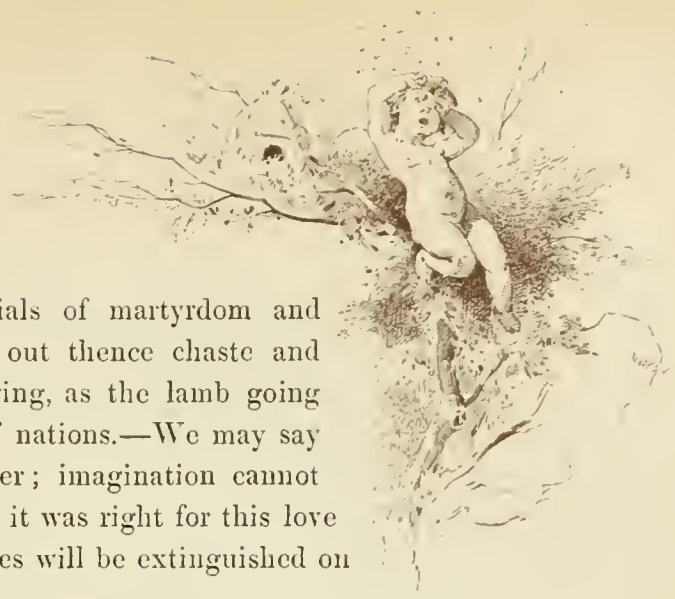
Ovid, Virgil, Tibullus, Propertius, Theocritus, Catullus, and many others have sung their immortal loves; Dido, Camilla, and Neæra express the merriment, charm, and torments of classical love, in its various aspects of tenderness, ardour, caprice, and in its inconstant voluptuousness and passion.

Classical love can be depicted in these four words: *to feel* and *to desire*. The first of sentiments was the worship of the beautiful in its most complex forms, and physically and morally harmonising; what was then beautiful became divine, and was idolised as such. The Latins had the same word to express the idea of *love* and of *selection*. Love was therefore a more or less natural selection of the species, a quite æsthetic and sensual selection, in which did not enter all the psychical considerations which Christian morality since then slowly has instilled within us.

Christianity, at its very beginning, invented, so to say, all our sentiments. Nodier, in a very eloquent page, depicts better than anybody this transformation of the human ideal:—

"The shepherds," he wrote, "arrived before the manger with their hands full of flowers, like shepherds in poetry, and bestowed them on a rejuvenescent world as the pledge of a new spring; the most precious of those gifts, now so despised, were liberty and Love.

"This Christian love, perhaps originated under the shadow of the silent contemplations of Pythagoras, developed in the sublime reveries of Plato, fed by the dreamy faith of the Essenians, exalted by the romanesque sensibility of its followers, existed some cen-

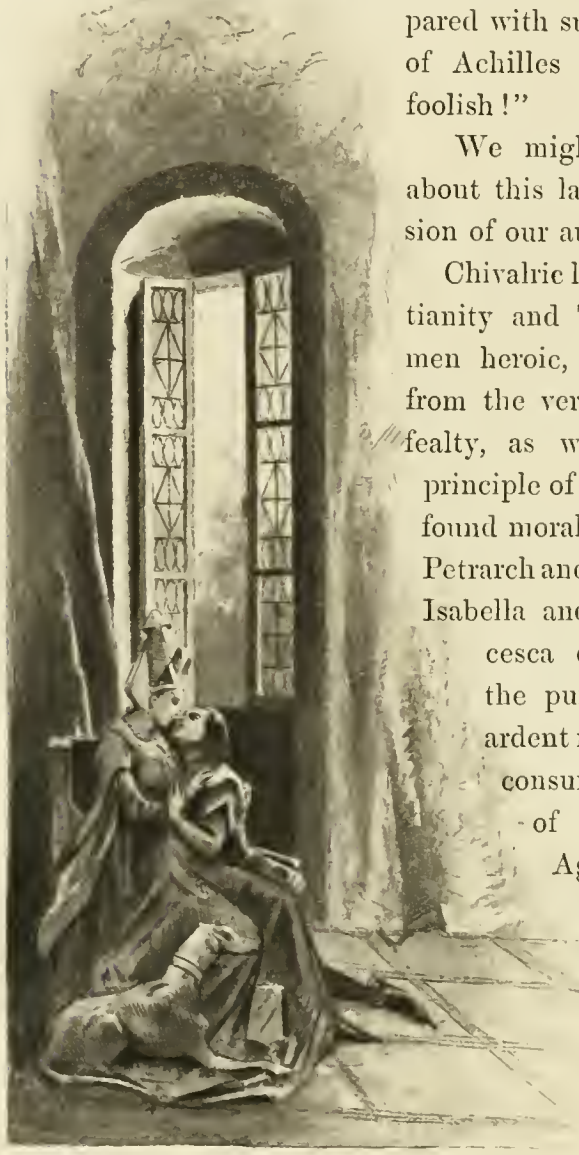


turies before it left behind the trials of martyrdom and exile in the catacombs. It came out thence chaste and gentle, but also sad, pale, and suffering, as the lamb going to be sacrificed for the last feast of nations.—We may say that after this love there is no other; imagination cannot conceive anything to replace it, and it was right for this love to be born in a tomb, for its last flames will be extinguished on the eternal tomb of nations."

After having rightly proved that Christianity is distinguished from any other religion, because its sanctuary is not in the imagination but in the heart, the learned and eloquent Nodier continues thus:—

"The form of Christian love was not immutable as its principle was; it followed, according to its nature, the various modifications of Christian society, but without changing the imposing character which reveals its origin. . . . Tell me, you, whom beauty always inspires, and who understand its language, what witchcraft is possessed by beauty and love in the chronicles of the Middle Ages, in the mellifluous songs of the troubadours, in the romantic fables of the paladins; and if you do not possess the secret of resuscitating the past, ask Hugo or Vigny for some of those transformations which are a mere trifle for their magic wand. The scene is already before our eyes, with its almost cyclopean towers, its lanceolated ogives, its windows veiled by ivy, its lofty and large balconies, over which the chisel of a patient sculptor has carved a canopy of foliage which seemingly trembles. Here is the long gallery with its resonant pavement; and this young creature, lost in thought, incessantly walking up and down, and halting at each step, is the lady of the manor, who has been waiting for two years for her squire to come from Palestine, but who no longer expects him to return, for she is weeping.—And yet this warrior will bring her only an uncertain message, a consolation betrayed perhaps by a hundred

battles, a rosary blessed by the Church, or a bloodstained scarf; happy if it be not some ill-omened case in which gradually has shrivelled up a heart which ceased to beat for her! . . . Compared with such sentiments, the loves of Achilles and Eneas must appear foolish!"

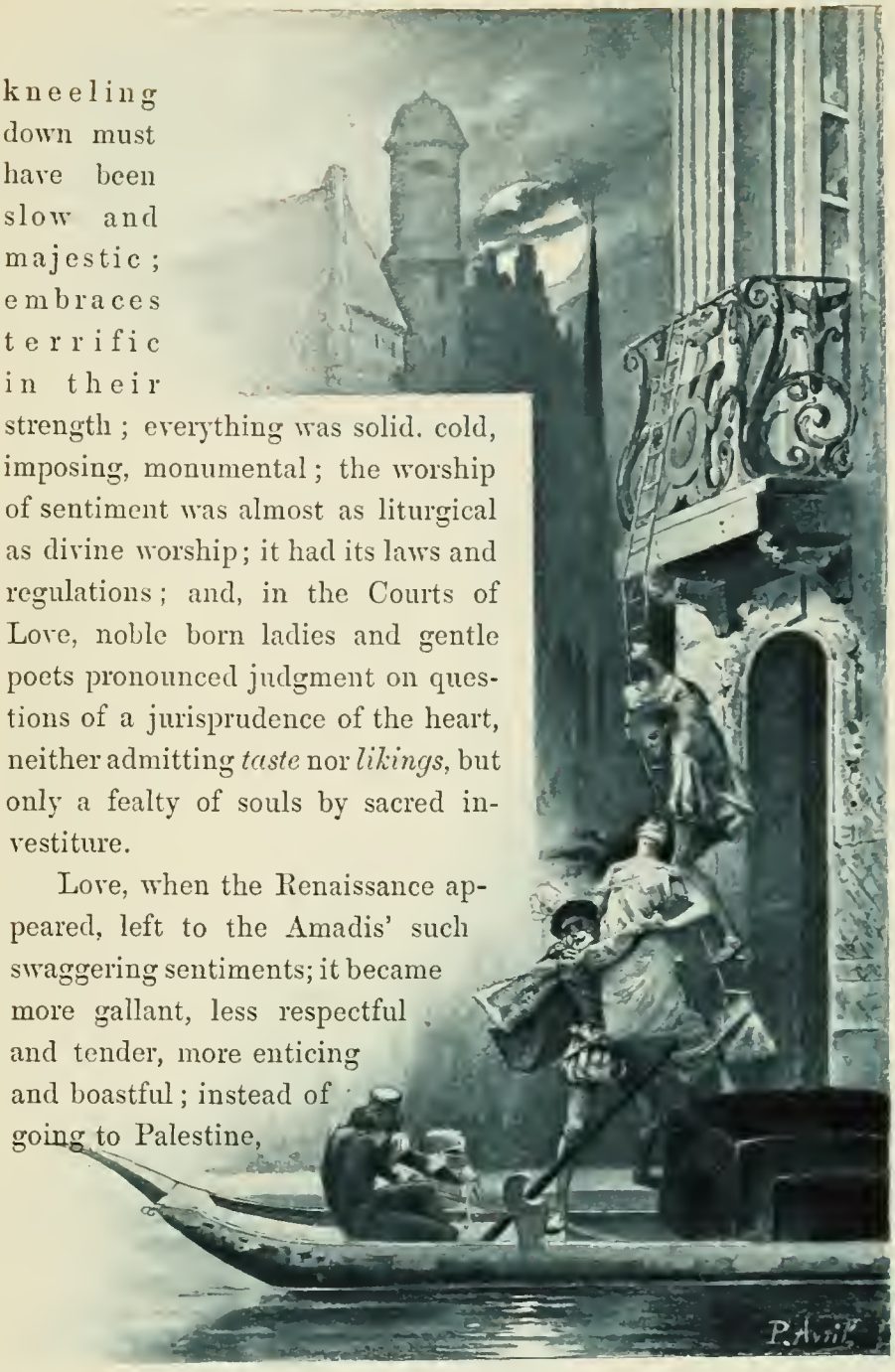


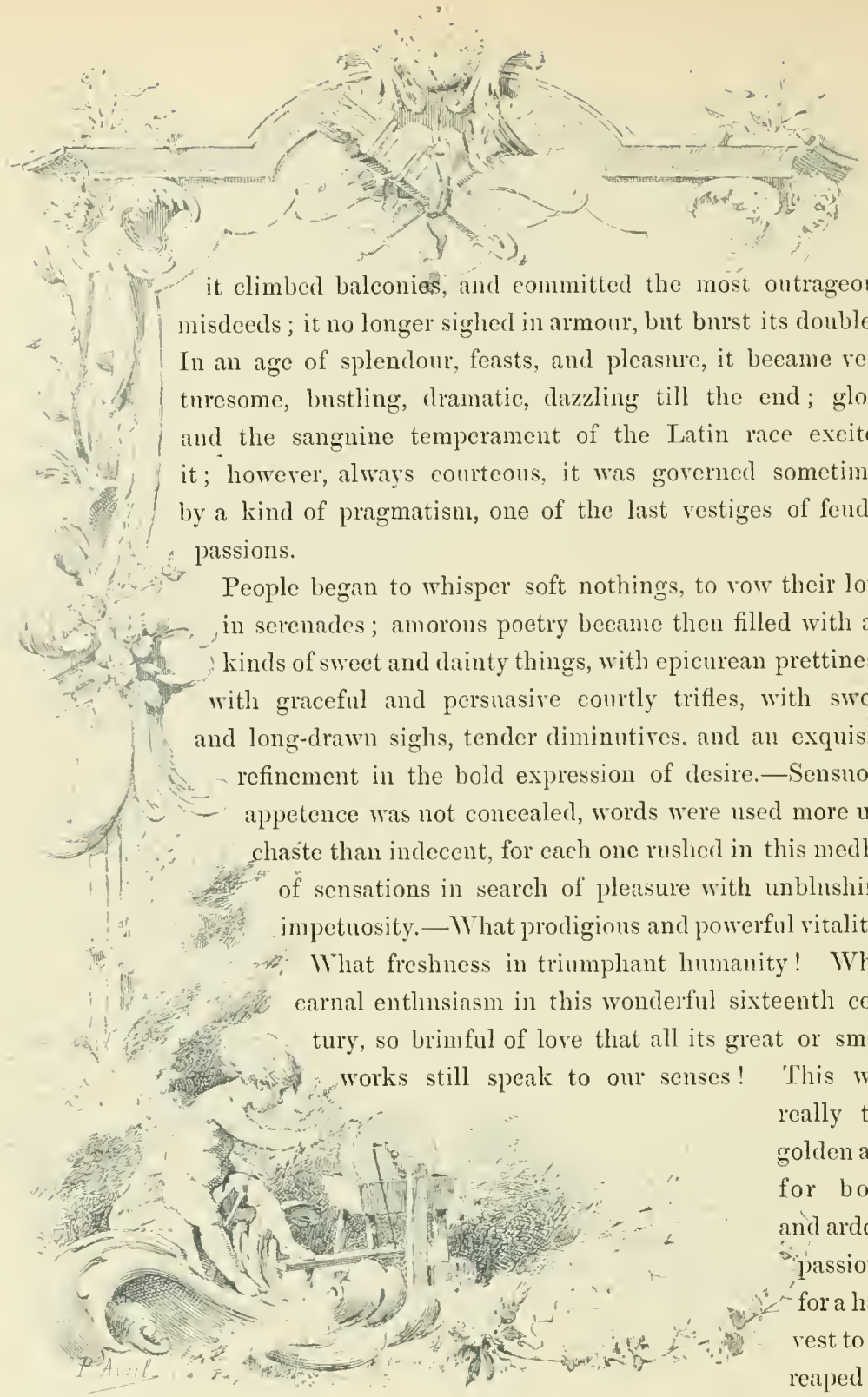
We might make some remarks about this last and disdainful expression of our author, but will go on.

Chivalric love, the offspring of Christianity and Teutonic manners, made men heroic, for it drew its strength from the very sources of honour and fealty, as well as from a supreme principle of courage, respect, and profound morality. Let us call to mind Petrarch and Laura, Romeo and Juliet, Isabella and Zerbino, or else Francesca di Rimini. Everywhere the purest, most constant, and ardent flame burns without being consumed in the Gothic temple of love during the Middle Ages.—The heart seemingly beats stronger neath this armour which hindered motion whilst improving the gait, which starched gracefulness and imprisoned all bold desires;

kneeling down must have been slow and majestic; embraces terrific in their strength; everything was solid. cold, imposing, monumental; the worship of sentiment was almost as liturgical as divine worship; it had its laws and regulations; and, in the Courts of Love, noble born ladies and gentle poets pronounced judgment on questions of a jurisprudence of the heart, neither admitting *taste* nor *likings*, but only a fealty of souls by sacred investiture.

Love, when the Renaissance appeared, left to the Amadis' such swaggering sentiments; it became more gallant, less respectful and tender, more enticing and boastful; instead of going to Palestine,



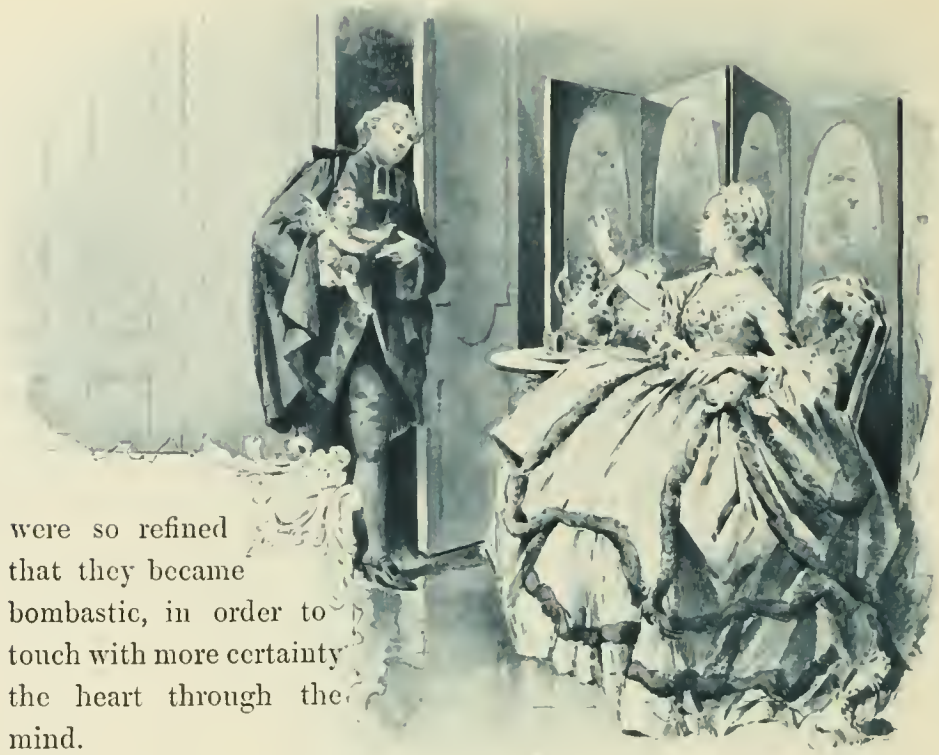


it climbed balconies, and committed the most outrageous misdeeds ; it no longer sighed in armour, but burst its doublet. In an age of splendour, feasts, and pleasure, it became venturesome, bustling, dramatic, dazzling till the end ; glory and the sanguine temperament of the Latin race excited it ; however, always courteous, it was governed sometimes by a kind of pragmatism, one of the last vestiges of feudal passions.

People began to whisper soft nothings, to vow their love in serenades ; amorous poetry became then filled with all kinds of sweet and dainty things, with epicurean prettiness, with graceful and persuasive courtly trifles, with sweet and long-drawn sighs, tender diminutives, and an exquisite refinement in the bold expression of desire.—Sensuous appetence was not concealed, words were used more unchaste than indecent, for each one rushed in this medley of sensations in search of pleasure with unblushing impetuosity.—What prodigious and powerful vitality ! What freshness in triumphant humanity ! What carnal enthusiasm in this wonderful sixteenth century, so brimful of love that all its great or small works still speak to our senses ! This was really the golden age for bold and ardent passions, for a harvest to be reaped on

female lips, for healthy and vigorous unions, for manly and physical bravery, epic gallantry, and sturdy and powerful voluptuousness.

The seventeenth century mitigated this by introducing a somewhat new ideality. Love in the Italian style was succeeded by Love in the Spanish fashion, a love full of affectation and kind attentions, imprisoned by decorum, tied by duty, never separated, based on complicated and dull metaphysics. The heroic, pastoral novel *Astrea*, of which the doctrines were first accepted by the frequenters of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, to spread thence into fashionable society, mixed chivalric feeling with platonic love, and, as Saint-Marc Girardin remarks, greatly contributed to bring to its acme the preponderance of women in society and literature. The typical perfect lover was the gentleman described by Faret, *dying* discreetly and quietly, suffering, sighing, and not saying a word; the paragon of softened virtue was the lady depicted by Du Boscq so morally and correctly. Time was then the surest auxiliary of love, and all professed lovers and arrant gallants liked to languish in their slow and discreet pursuit; gentle allusions were made, eyes spoke but lips remained dumb, and madrigals



were so refined that they became bombastic, in order to touch with more certainty the heart through the mind.

The entire bewigged seventeenth century regulates Love pompously, and strains sentiment so affectedly, that it must have suffered through it; everything seems prepared, laid out, pruned like the gardens of Le Nôtre; nothing was natural, lively, eccentric, independent, mad, but much was rectilinear, cold, courteous, and magnificent. These illustrious grand ladies, liked by Victor Cousin, inspire us, at a distance, with none of that retrospective tenderness we bestow so willingly on those whose life has been illumined by Love, and who have become immortalised by the very exuberance of their passions.—During the seventeenth century Love was so prim, and so confined by whalebone, silks, and decorum, that we can hardly imagine it in undress. It remains standing, and seems never to go to sleep; it is as correct and majestic as a minuet.

We must come to the eighteenth century to find jovial, ephe-

meral, and madcap love. After the austere latter years of Louis XIV. Love seems to abandon all worship, and to become a butterfly; epicurean society only wants fugitive sensations; the soul has nothing more to do with love, and sentiment becomes as fashionable as dress; love is hawked about as a pamphlet, and the little *abbés* introduce it during their morning call on female gossips.—The heart no longer dares to vie with wit, and the whole of life is spent in joking and gallant skirmishing. Jealousy even is forbidden; men worship in Love even the loves of their mistress. But is this really Love, or only a degraded and debased copy of it, without any genuine expression?—To say the truth, it is only a sixth sense slightly intoxicating, and indulged in exuberantly; the God of the gardens is thus coquettishly honoured and festooned with gew-gaws, baubles, and tinsel.

In *the New Heloise*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau rekindles the

extinguished fire, and leads us back to a melancholic and dreamy tenderness, thirsting after the infinite; he invented the metaphysical uneasiness of the passionate soul, and ascribing all sentiment to nature, whose beauties he perhaps for the first time revealed, he not only turned the French mind out to grass, as Sainte-Beuve said, but communicated the disturbing and mystic charms of rural life to the heart. From that time Love felt incurable and analytical; it became languishing, excited, inactive, crying; it fed its passion hysterically whilst cursing it during the first twenty years of this century; it contaminated our literature, the monotonous sentimentality of which has deadened the heart of so many rising generations; thence spring De Musset and Lamartine.

The Revolution, however, established a current opposed to this exaggeration of the heart and senses, and seems to have destroyed, by its Pagan Renaissance, those effluvia and tempests of passions feeding on themselves. The feelings of the Ancient Régime had gone down with it only to rise again twenty years later. The Revolution led back Love to its ancient simplicity, and attempted to resuscitate, in its own way, mythological voluptuousness. Each woman became a goddess; they made love to Psyche, Flora, and Hebe; Cupid untied the sandals of citizen-Phrynes, and every one tried to give to his heart no other religion but the so-called natural, or rather physical, religion. Cabanis, the physiological high priest of that time, clearly defines what *revolutionised love* should be:—

"One of the causes," he says, "which have contributed to pervert Love through artificial exaltation, is the want of objects of really great interest, and the general idleness of the wealthy. . . .

Under the beneficent rule of equality, under the all-powerful interest of public reason, foreign to all exaggeration, all enthusiasm, Love will be the consoler but not the arbiter of life, and will embellish but not occupy it. When he occupies it he degrades it, and soon becomes himself extinguished in disgust."

In spite of Cabanis' decree, taken up later by Sénancourt, Love escaped the laws of civic reasoning. After the wars of the Empire, it retook possession of a nation enervated and morally aching to exercise its tyranny with more power than ever over literature, society, and manners. It was not sparkling Love, varied by inconstancy, which came back from exile, but a sombre passion with an excessive development of desires never to be realised. People understood then that Love was a longing for immortality only to be divinised by obstacles and pain. They felt the emptiness of possession, the annihilation of desire by the contact of the senses, and they adopted this Platonic morality, that there is no being so bad which pure Love does not render peerless and virtuous. They thought that nothing in Love could be limited, except for limited minds, and wished it infinite beyond any human comprehension, superior to paganism, above all laws, towering over the world which it moves and veils in its mysteries.

Where has anything better been said of Love than in *The Imitation of Christ?*

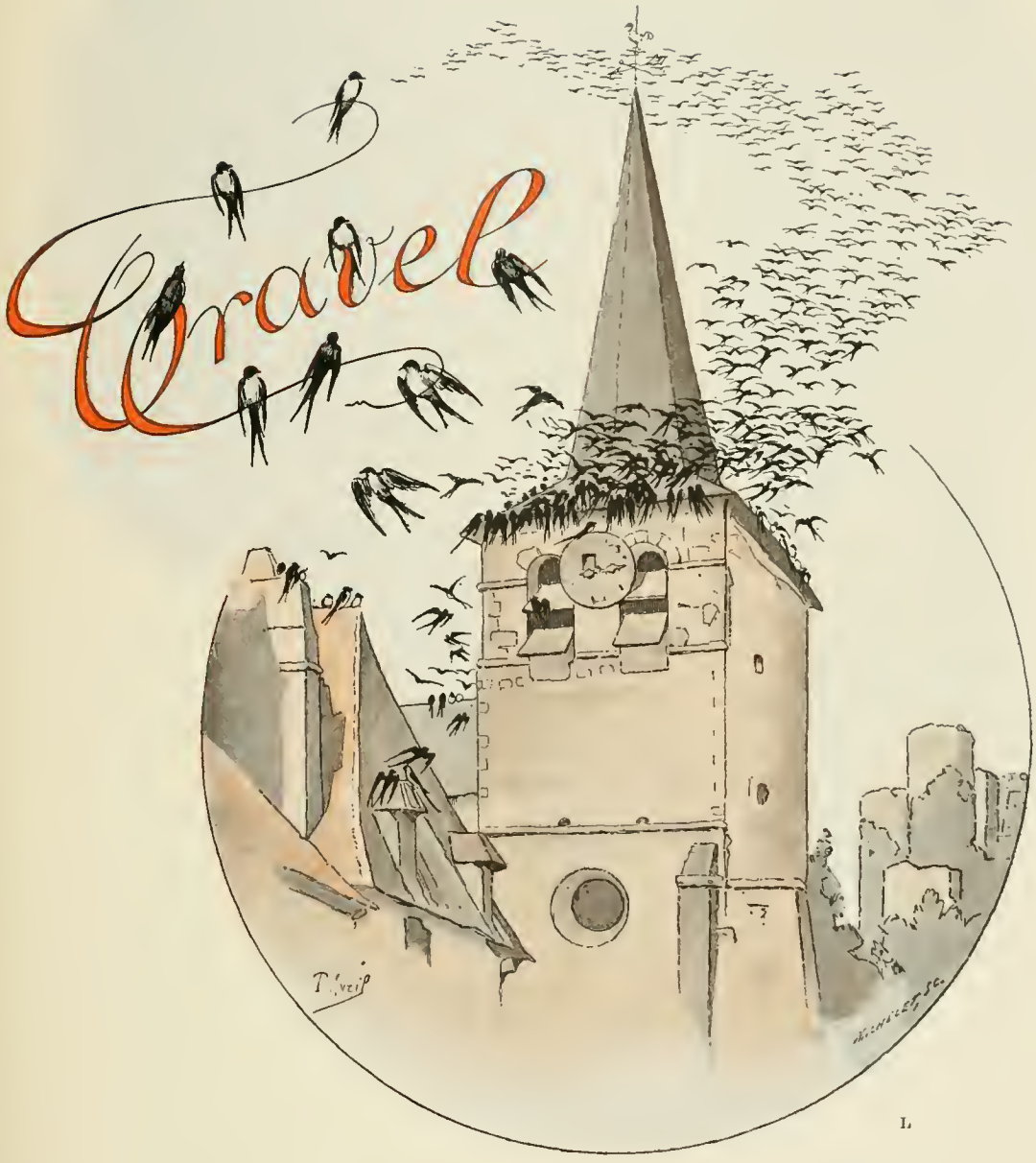
"Love willeth to be raised up, and not to be held down by any mean thing. Love willeth to be free and aloof from all worldly affection, lest its inward power of vision be hindered,

lest it be entangled by any worldly prosperity or overcome by adversity. Nothing is sweeter than Love, nothing stronger, nothing loftier, nothing broader, nothing pleasanter, nothing fuller nor better in heaven nor in earth, for Love was born of God, and cannot rest save in God above all created things.

"He who loveth flieth, runneth, and is glad; he is free and not hindered. He giveth all things for all things, because he resteth in One who is high above all, from whom every good floweth and proceedeth.

"Love is watchful, and whilst sleeping still keepeth watch; though fatigued it is not weary; though pressed it is not forced; though alarmed it is not terrified; but, like the living flame and the burning torch, it breaketh forth on high and securely triumpheth!"

Only those who love or have loved can understand this eloquent language.


Travel

TRAVEL.

"An Englishman travels to look at things;
a Frenchman to be looked at."—RIVAROL.

THE Ancients delighted in comparing the world to a colossal book, of which a man who had only seen his native country had merely read one sheet. Nothing can be truer than this idea. Travel balances our mind by comparison, moderates our vanity, assures our judgment, and perfects us in everything, when we know how to derive from it the advantages which it can procure, and to preserve us from the inconveniences which we very often meet.—"There is no better school for wisdom than travel," wrote already La Mothe Le Vayer, at a time when Madame de Sévigné proclaimed that "travel wears out the body and the carriage;" and both these opinions have been continually discussed

by sedentary temperaments leading a monotonous and regulated life, with a mania for their own nationality; and by more venturesome and winged minds moving about in a circle of observations which they rightly suppose as grand as the terrestrial sphere.

Some people profess the theory that happiness here below consists in our having regular habits; that living in the same place, in an agreeable abode, amidst friendly faces always the same, in the society of a woman who has made sentiment stable and love eternal, is the ideal of a wise man; that to look for anything else is to move about in a vacuum and never to settle; that it is to flee from common-sense, logic, and from one's self, and to let weariness always follow you. They add that imagination, that wanderer which traverses space through a marvellous telepathy, peoples our dreams with richer, more splendid, and warmer fancies than the remembrance of all the real visions hunted after in the various panoramas of the globe; they conclude, in short, by maintaining that in general man travels only to have travelled, that is to say, through being vainer than his neighbour, and that, in all these useless removals, he loses in illusions what he gains in experience, thus changing his gold for silver coin.

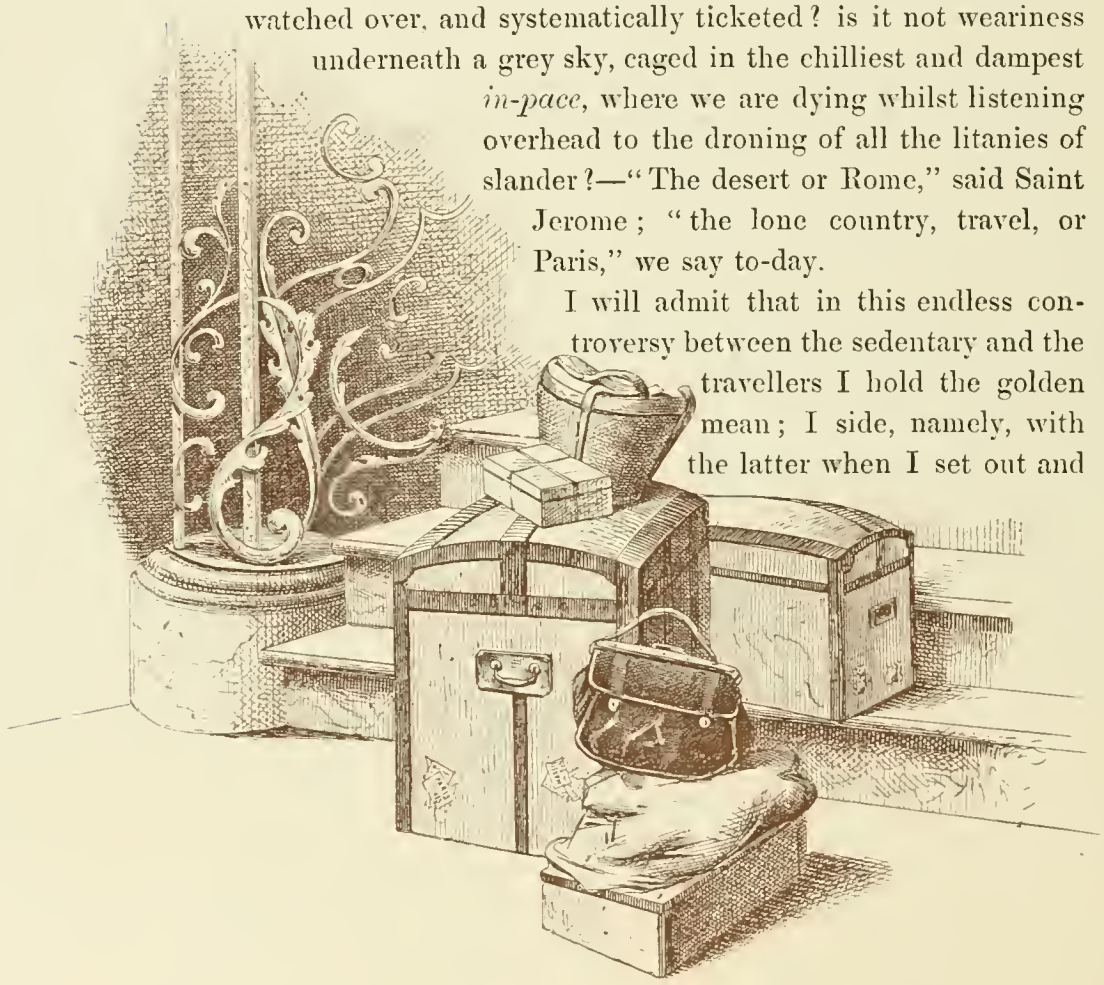
Others, not less judicious in their parrying, exclaim with grand gesticulations that to travel is really to live; that thus we abandon the degrading and despotic slavery of ordinary life, cease to vegetate and to become brutalised in a society which perforce grows provincial. They start up and point at the distant horizons where people study, make researches, dream; they are of opinion that to

die without knowing anything, and to be disgusted with everything we know, proves a nature dulled by daily going in its stupid and monstruously chosen corner; that thus we resemble a cast horse and not a man divinely endowed, with eyes to see afar, and ears to hear every idiom; they emit this paradox that every home for a long time dwelt in seems a kind of cellular prison, that all faces too often looked upon irritate and become odious, that the regularity of meals, of going to bed, of rising, the identical character of the dishes eaten, of the neighbours perceived, the mattress on which we rest, constitute a sickening and loathsome existence from which we must withdraw ourselves by flight, no matter where, during winter by going to sunny lands, during summer by wandering through various lands or on the shores of all countries.

They set out, these sparrows of sudden migrations, to war against the tautology of sedentary imaginations and the sameness of caged and stupidly homotonous and concentric sensations; they give us to understand that everything in created nature invites us to travel; first the earth dragging us along in its course; the moon incessantly travelling around us; the climates travelling to renew everywhere the seasons, and the birds, insects, and germs, and human reason so often leaving us for having moved too narrowly on the same axis. They make us understand that travel is

the indignant revolt of a man who does not wish to die like a snail, and who pretends to go as far as the columns of Hercules and find out all he can on the inhabited globe.—They understand, if need be, stagnant life in Paris for six months at most, for there anything unforeseen may turn up; the whole of Europe passes, all the provinces flock thither; there every hour of the day and night happens something unexpected and always renewed; there our passions become refined through exquisite variety and an intellectual exchange not to be found elsewhere; there we have the sensation of being carried away rapidly, of chance, of an ever-growing curiosity, the free outlet of our fancy, and of the pleasant and easy loosening of all habits and customs.

But does a sedentary life in the provinces not dull our faculties; is it not figurative death amidst a heavy, cold, formal life, surveyed, watched over, and systematically ticketed? is it not weariness underneath a grey sky, caged in the chilliest and dampest *in-pace*, where we are dying whilst listening overhead to the droning of all the litanies of slander?—"The desert or Rome," said Saint Jerome; "the lone country, travel, or Paris," we say to-day.

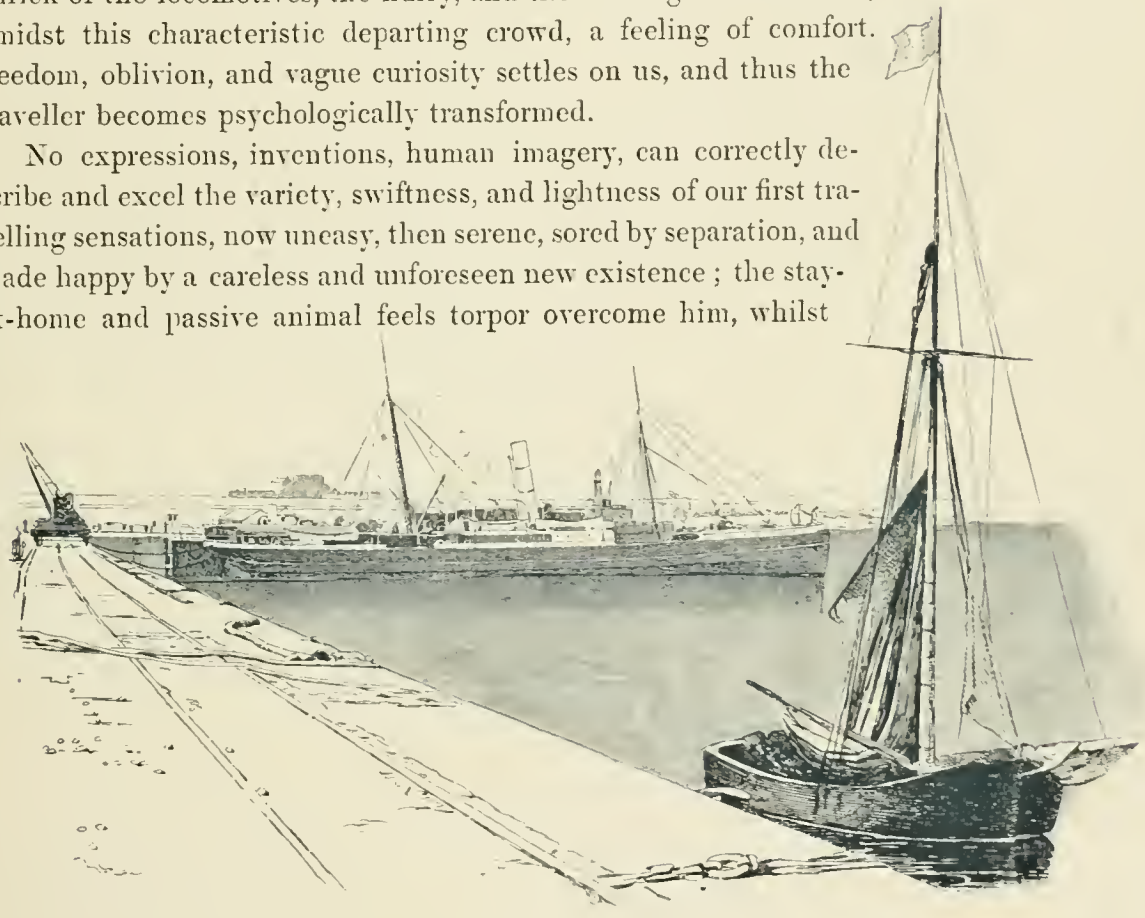


I will admit that in this endless controversy between the sedentary and the travellers I hold the golden mean; I side, namely, with the latter when I set out and

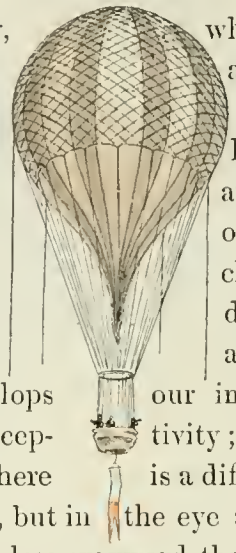
with the first when I return; travel in reality is only starting and arriving.

The departure, so full of feverish agitation and intoxication, amidst the clashing of feelings of affection for those we leave and the desire for the absolute independence we create, can never be forgotten, and is peculiarly intense; life suddenly takes another course. The day before, friends on bidding us farewell, and shaking us by the hand, exclaim, "Lucky fellow!" The married ones add to this sigh of envy the complaint of people not free: "Make the most of it! . . . when you'll be married . . ." Gradually we are left alone, we feel that we shall be born again and metamorphosed; and, however, at the last moment, the sadness of the closed and darkened house penetrates us; then the carriage with the luggage leaves, and we seem already lighter. Amidst the noise at the station, the various leave-takings, the shriek of the locomotives, the hurry, and the rushing into the train, amidst this characteristic departing crowd, a feeling of comfort, freedom, oblivion, and vague curiosity settles on us, and thus the traveller becomes psychologically transformed.

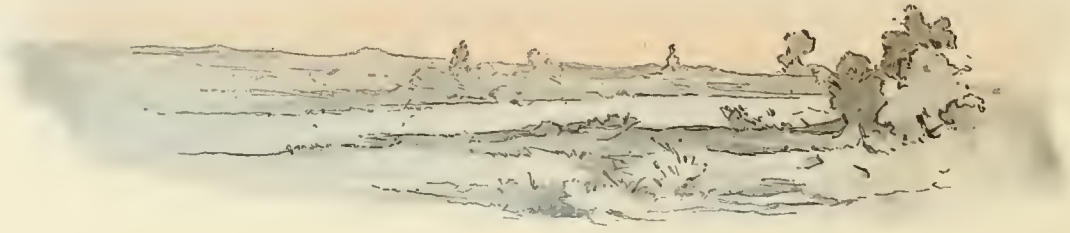
No expressions, inventions, human imagery, can correctly describe and excel the variety, swiftness, and lightness of our first travelling sensations, now uneasy, then serene, sored by separation, and made happy by a careless and unforeseen new existence; the stay-at-home and passive animal feels torpor overcome him, whilst



the idealist and explorer, free and unfettered, has fanciful dreams. The hours pass quickly, whilst the wheels keep time with our thoughts, and already we are in the harbour where the boat is lying to take us to the East, far from the land which our education has made us love, and on which from the offing we will look soon as on a bride, with eyes at once bright and melancholic.



Travel gradually tones down our normal perceptions formed of inward affections concentrated in home life, but it develops our impressible physical system, our intuition and receptivity; we become less sensible and more sensitive; there is a difference; our perceptions are no longer in the heart, but in the eye and the brain. We are active, and feel, however, less wayward than in the sphere of our ordinary ambitions; we wear out less, abandoning ourselves to the machinery carrying us away, and to the servants who everywhere busy themselves as cleverly as in fairyland. We have nothing to do but to live, and that is why travelling is the greatest moral repose we can wish for. We soar above things as if we were in a balloon, not feeling anything. We float in space; everything aids us and acts for us; an intense feeling of comfort, indolence, and oblivion pervades us; no more annoyance, worry, or strife; varied things, manners, nations, landscapes pass before us, and we are without cares, for everything unknown will present itself to us at night or the next morning. Tired of seeing, we close our eyes to look within us, in this workshop of thought where the fire seems extinguished, so much have carelessness and indifference dulled our notions of life. However, the air strikes and vivifies us, sweeping away in its passage all our past cares and troubles for the future; profound peace reigns within us, and our absent beloved appear to us under vague forms, of which we inwardly catch a glimpse, smiling gently and caressingly, satisfied with our

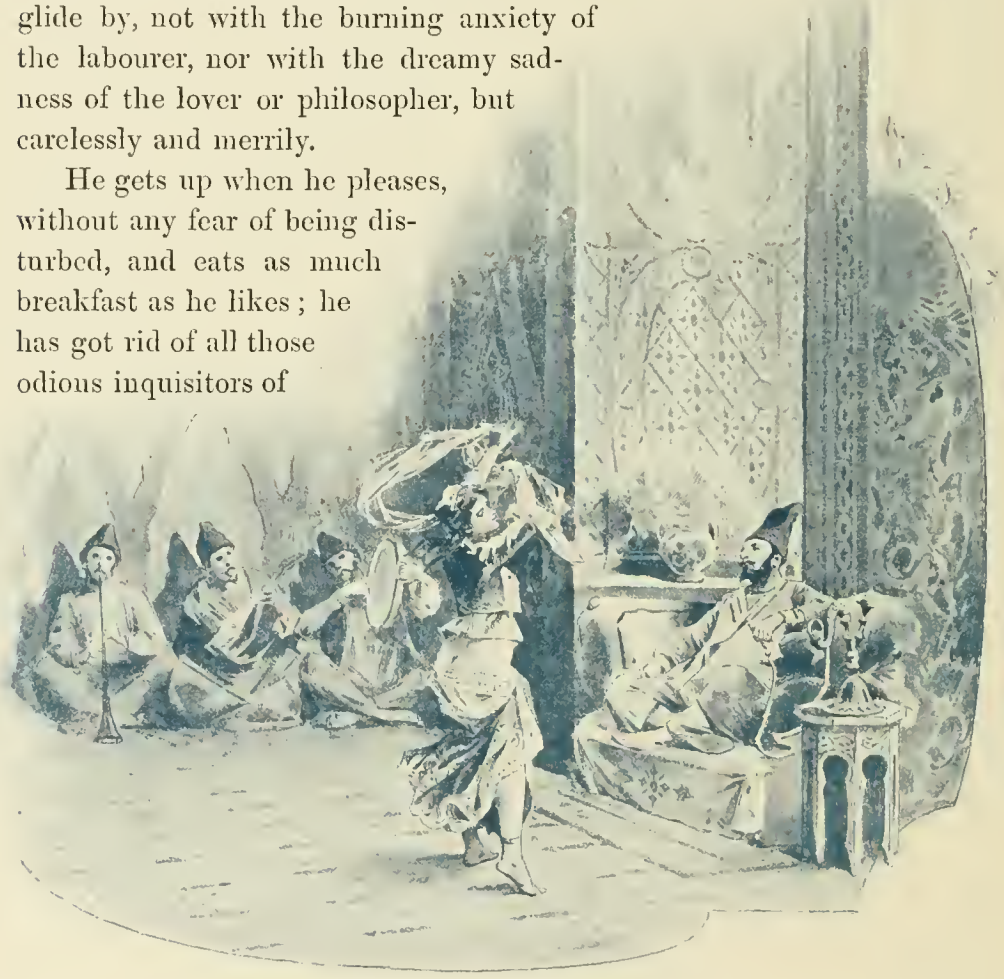


repose, our voluptuous non-existence, our momentary oblivion. We see again yonder, as in a lukewarm mist, those affections we left behind us, which, in their impatience, discount the lonely sadness of the present with the always open bank of Hope, for the consoling hour of our return. But the true traveller is not moved for long by those apparitions which are only the ambient poetry of his migratory habits; travel makes of its followers egotists, and loosens all ties and affections. The traveller by instinct and vocation gathers every fugitive sensation without allowing it to become sentiment, and thus leaves no Penelopes behind him, but rather Ariadnes courted for the nonce in every port.

Life rocks him to sleep, and without any fatigue he arrives in roseate and pleasant Eastern towns, amidst white minarets, under a radiant sun, with bluish shadows, spreading over all like molten gold. Everywhere he is received as a stranger with such attentions that he is free from all cares for material things; he lands, and a hundred porters pounce on his trunks and baggage, a score of hotelkeepers quarrel to lodge him, as many dragomans solicit the honour of serving him; everywhere he is feasted, solicited; his slightest wishes are immediately realised; he can believe himself the Caliph of Bagdad, or a Prince on his travels.

The day seems short to him, and he experiences that exquisite feeling of being absolute master of his time, of seeing the hours glide by, not with the burning anxiety of the labourer, nor with the dreamy sadness of the lover or philosopher, but carelessly and merrily.

He gets up when he pleases, without any fear of being disturbed, and eats as much breakfast as he likes; he has got rid of all those odious inquisitors of



European domesticity; he can go wherever he wishes, without being controlled by these spies, abandon himself to chance, to the unforeseen, stop where he likes, and change his manners as he fancies. He can, if it pleases him, become a Mohammedan, reign over a seraglio, command musicians and bayaderes; and decorum, etiquette, and public opinion, those

merciless duennas, will not suddenly interfere with his caprices. Being a stranger gives him every right; he is at liberty to realise the most unlikely follies. Whilst moving along, all kind of proposals are made to him, and gradually he becomes convinced that the whole Universe, with its vices and virtues, is for sale; men and women, nations and towns, appear to him put up to auction by the scoundrels who surround him.

Moreover, if the traveller be a man of culture, if imagination sways him with its exciting prism and its transforming light, this cosmopolite can raise up within him every incarnation, be Hassan in Stamboul and Casanova in Venice. Isolated in a world whence he can easily withdraw, and on which he can look as it suits him, it is easy for him to revive the past, to people those Venetian lagunes with the

extravagant colouring of the time when the Doge went to wed the Adriatic; to behold again brilliant feasts in the Pitti Palace and in this Florence, now so dead; to let tempestuous civil war rage in Sienna, now as beautiful as in the Middle Ages, as if it had been kept in a jewel-box; to breathe love sighs like Romeo in cold Verona, now only an historical tomb, a mausoleum of Art disappeared.

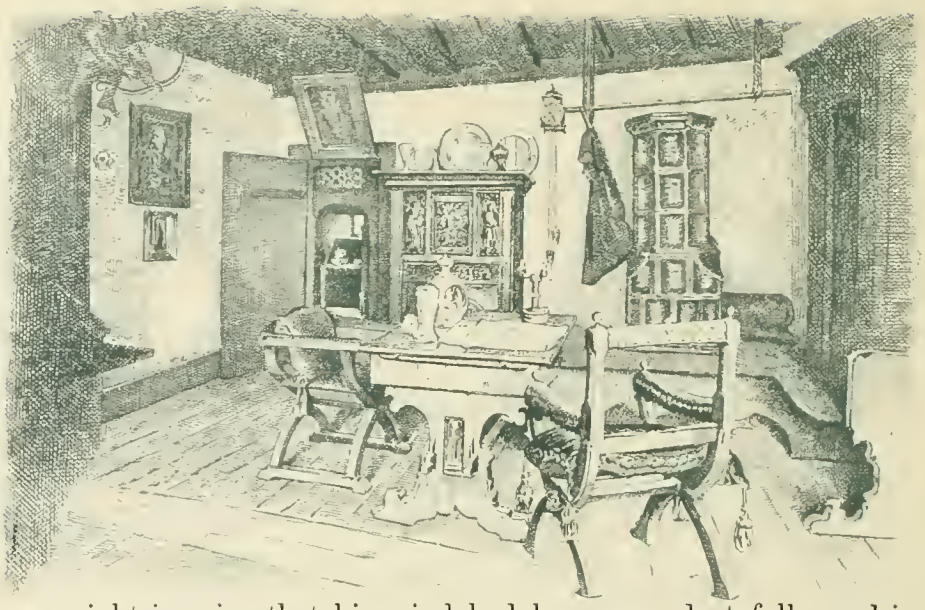
Montaigne, who wandered so long through Germany, Switzer-

land, and Italy, speaks charmingly of travelling. "Travelling," he says, "appears to me a profitable exercise; the mind is then continually busy in observing unknown and new things; I do not know a better school for fashioning life than incessantly to propose to it the diversity of so many other lives, fancies, and customs, and to make it enjoy such a perpetual variety of forms of our nature. The body is then neither idle nor overworked, and this moderate agitation keeps it in order. The change of air and climate does not influence me; every sky is the same to me; I am only moved by the internal changes I produce within me; and those I feel less when I travel."

He says elsewhere, "I consider all men as my fellow-countrymen, and would embrace a Pole as I would a Frenchman, postponing the tie of nationality to the universal and common Nature which has brought us into the world free and unfettered; we imprison ourselves in certain limits, just as the Kings of Persia bound themselves to drink no other water but that from the river Chospaez. . . . By

travelling I escape the opportunities of getting angry, and rid myself of the knowledge of things that go wrong; and if I cannot prevent my meeting at home at any time with something that displeases me. I have not this care whilst travelling, and look at my business from afar and in a general way, and would feel less the falling in of a tower than at present the dropping of a slate."

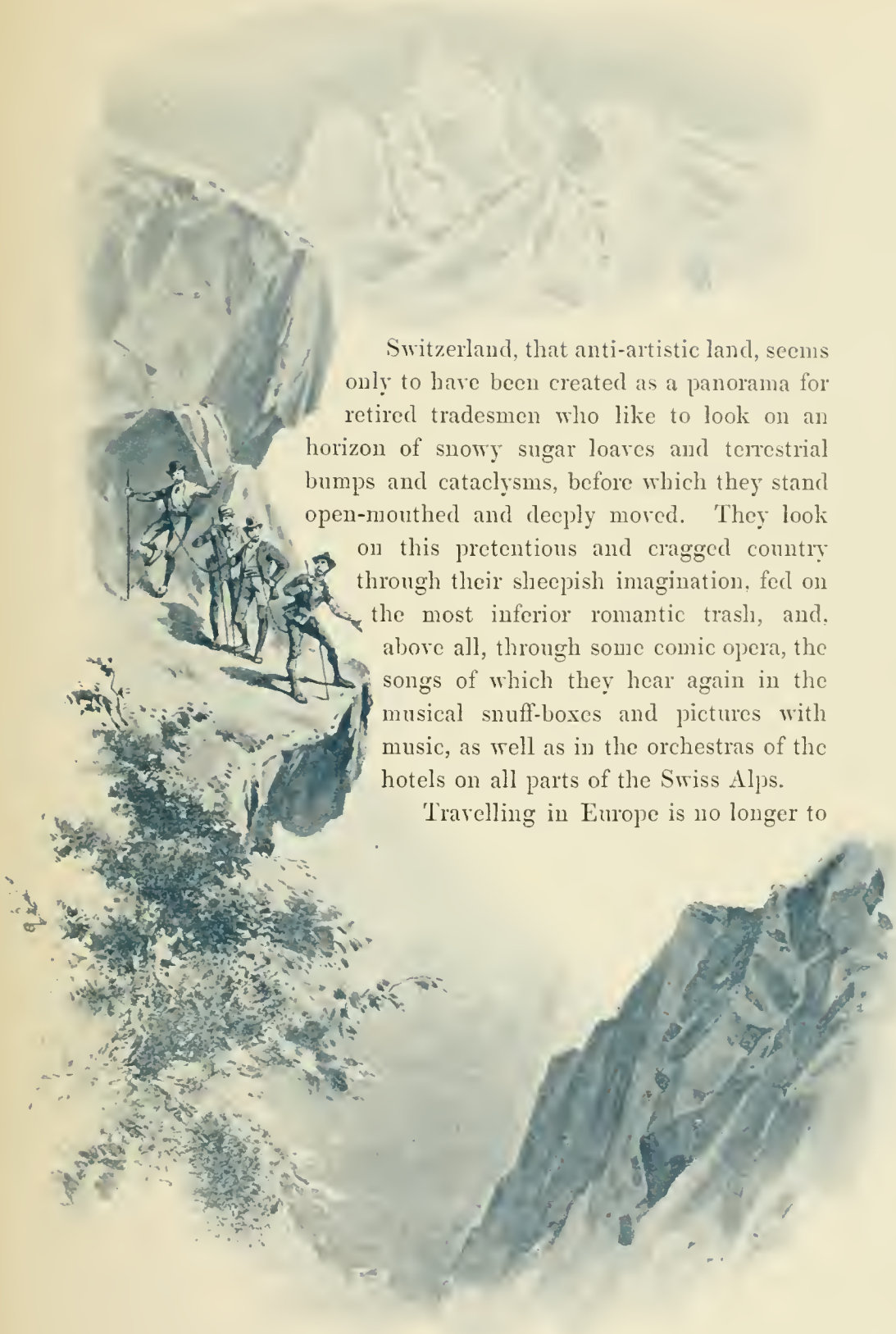
On this question of peregrination, on the marital obligation to travel, on the slavery of habits, Montaigne entertains large and superior ideas, all interwoven with this lofty common sense which gives such a high value to his work.—Nothing is more curious than to see him corroborate our actual thoughts on this subject;



we might imagine that his mind had been moved at full speed in our cosmopolitan present century.

Travelling often gives rise to durable sympathies, singularly opposed to one another, such as would make us select as a residence either London or Venice—the one on account of its busy, noisy life, carrying us away in its excessive logical machinery, making us scent, as it were, the odours of the Universe, thanks to its formidable jostling, and its abundant trans-oceanic traffic, which makes of this gigantic town the storehouse and market of the whole world ; the other by its mysterious poetry as a town festooned with splendid reminiscences, and by the exquisite calm it produces in our mind by the mere rocking of its gondolas, moving carelessly along on the Grand Canal.

No other town gives us in the same degree those profound sensations, neither New York, Berlin, Munich, Vienna, St. Petersburg ; and, on the other hand, in comparison with Venice, neither Constantinople, Amsterdam, Dresden, Triest, nor even Nuremberg, that beauteous pearl of Germany, so artistically surrounded, where we love to behold untouched the room of the great artist, Albert Durer.



Switzerland, that anti-artistic land, seems only to have been created as a panorama for retired tradesmen who like to look on an horizon of snowy sugar loaves and terrestrial bumps and cataclysms, before which they stand open-mouthed and deeply moved. They look on this pretentious and cragged country through their sheepish imagination, fed on the most inferior romantic trash, and, above all, through some comic opera, the songs of which they hear again in the musical snuff-boxes and pictures with music, as well as in the orchestras of the hotels on all parts of the Swiss Alps.

Travelling in Europe is no longer to

travel, for a sleeping-car only carries us from one place to another; and on our continent furrowed by railroads, that which constitutes the going backward and forward, a change of locomotion, anything unforeseen, will doubtless disappear more and more.

Already everywhere we find the same *table d'hôte*, the same cookery, the same faces, and the same conversation, and the hour is near when the uniformity of manners, conventional ideas, and dress will impose themselves on the entire universe. If ever that day comes there will be no interest more in travelling, and people will circulate amongst homogeneous nations with a feeling of overwhelming monotony; only the treasures and marvels of retrospective art will then make us rise from our chairs and lead us to admire the splendours of dead cities.

Sports

SPORTS.

"Sport implies three things, either simultaneous or separated; open air, betting, and the application of one or several physical qualities."
—CHAPUS.

IF we open an Encyclopædia at the word "sport" we read as follows: "By the term *sport*, of which the equivalent does not exist in French, and of which the meaning is not very precise in English, we describe a great many amusements, exercises, and simple pleasures, taking up a good deal of the time of rich or idle men. By sport we understand horse-racing, boating, hunting, shooting, fishing, archery, gymnastics, fencing, shooting with pistols and guns, boxing, single-stick, wrestling, tennis, cricket, driving, skating, swimming; in a word, all amusements which try the various aptitudes of man, his courage, agility, skill, and elasticity. In France *sport* is considered synonymous with *the turf;* but this is taking a part for the whole, for a sportsman

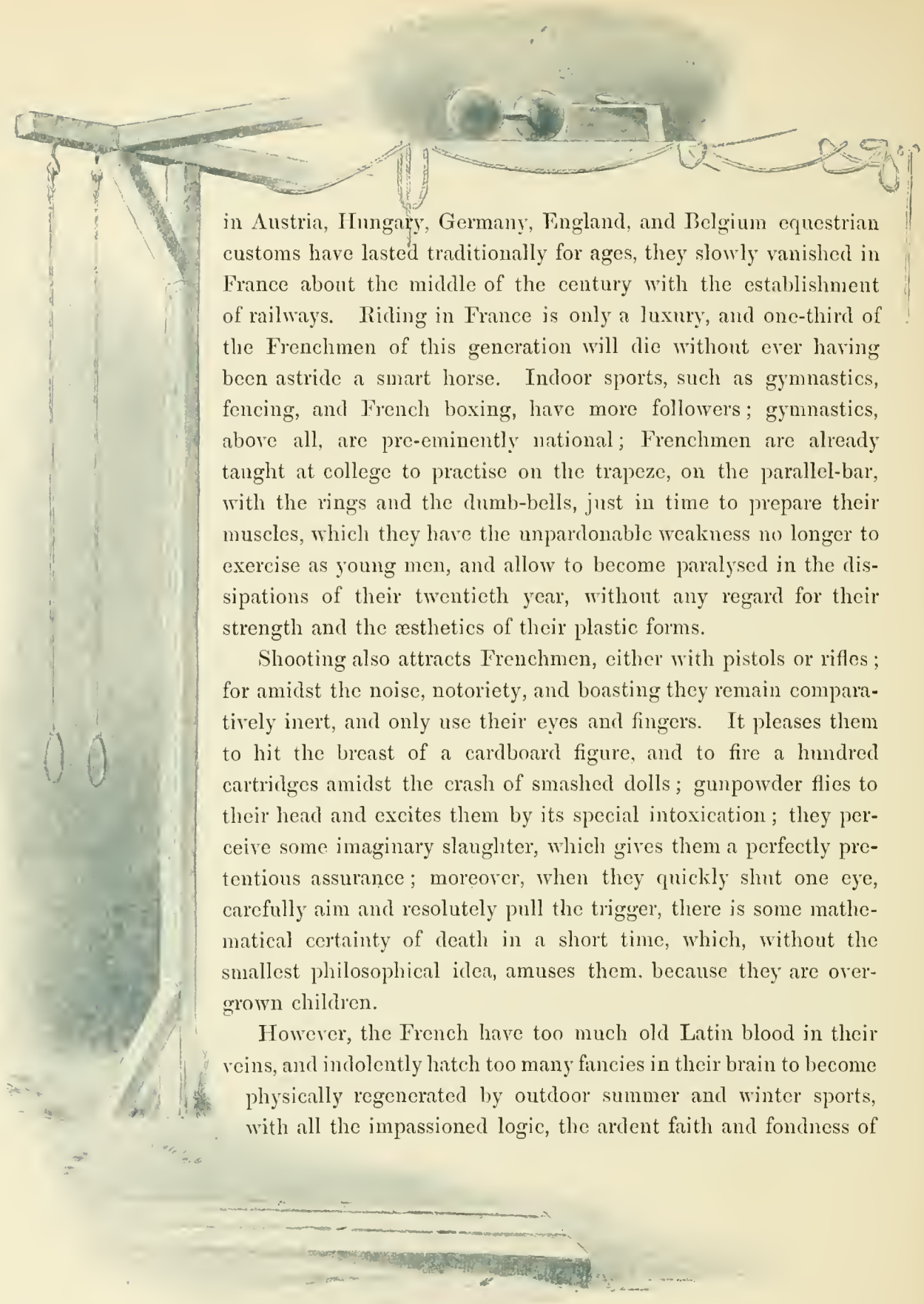
is not always on the turf, and a man on the turf is not always a sportsman."

This is all very well, but the word *sport* introduced into French about this century is only a more or less lame restitution of the old French word *desport*, which means, in ancient *fabliaux*, to play, divert, amuse oneself, just as "sportively" is employed in English. If I did not fear the severe remarks of grave etymologists, I might even add that perhaps *desport* is derived from the French *dispos*, hale, hearty, nimble, for nothing renders us more hale and hearty in mind and body than to exercise our muscles, and makes us better feel our strength, manhood, vitality, and courage.

Sports, so well understood and organised among Northern nations, and more particularly in England, have not yet very deeply

penetrated French habits and customs, and only are practised by the French upper classes, for fashion, elegance, and refinement require them to be more or less fond of sport, to ride gracefully, to fence elegantly and dashingly, and to swim very fairly, this latter art being particularly cultivated by women, in remembrance of Venus Aphrodite, and also for the sake of the numerous worshippers of form.

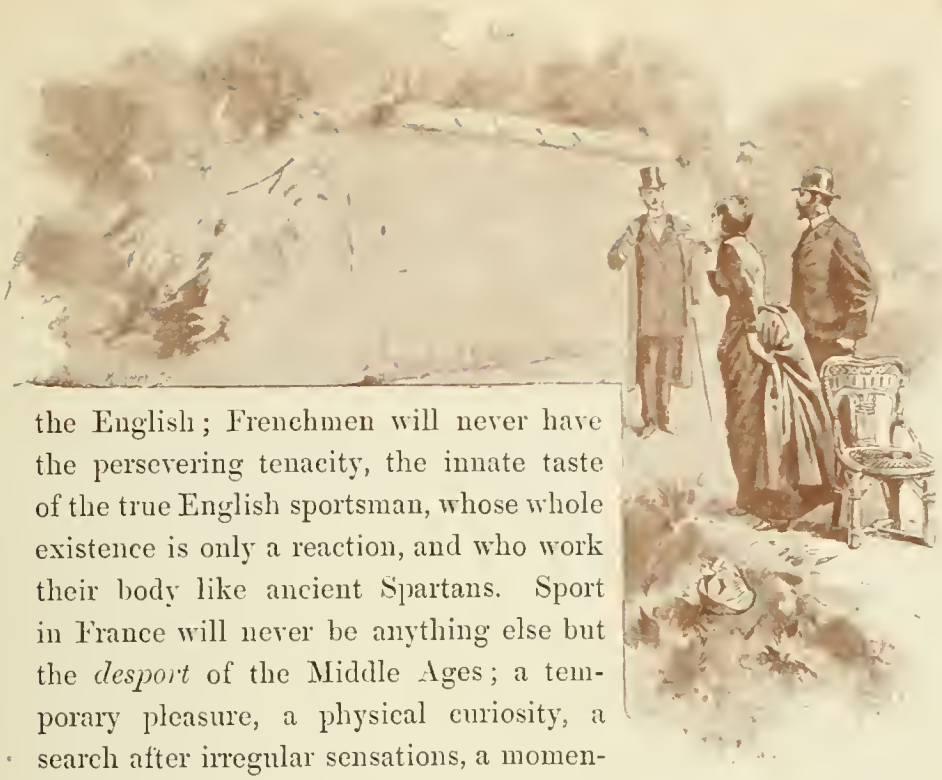
The majority of Frenchmen do not care much for sport; few countries have less horsey men than France; I do not mean gentlemen-riders, but men who like the horse and horse-exercise. Since the First Empire and the Restoration, the passion for horse-exercise has gradually disappeared from French habits; and whilst



in Austria, Hungary, Germany, England, and Belgium equestrian customs have lasted traditionally for ages, they slowly vanished in France about the middle of the century with the establishment of railways. Riding in France is only a luxury, and one-third of the Frenchmen of this generation will die without ever having been astride a smart horse. Indoor sports, such as gymnastics, fencing, and French boxing, have more followers; gymnastics, above all, are pre-eminently national; Frenchmen are already taught at college to practise on the trapeze, on the parallel-bar, with the rings and the dumb-bells, just in time to prepare their muscles, which they have the unpardonable weakness no longer to exercise as young men, and allow to become paralysed in the dissipations of their twentieth year, without any regard for their strength and the æsthetics of their plastic forms.

Shooting also attracts Frenchmen, either with pistols or rifles; for amidst the noise, notoriety, and boasting they remain comparatively inert, and only use their eyes and fingers. It pleases them to hit the breast of a cardboard figure, and to fire a hundred cartridges amidst the crash of smashed dolls; gunpowder flies to their head and excites them by its special intoxication; they perceive some imaginary slaughter, which gives them a perfectly pretentious assurance; moreover, when they quickly shut one eye, carefully aim and resolutely pull the trigger, there is some mathematical certainty of death in a short time, which, without the smallest philosophical idea, amuses them, because they are overgrown children.

However, the French have too much old Latin blood in their veins, and indolently hatch too many fancies in their brain to become physically regenerated by outdoor summer and winter sports, with all the impassioned logic, the ardent faith and fondness of



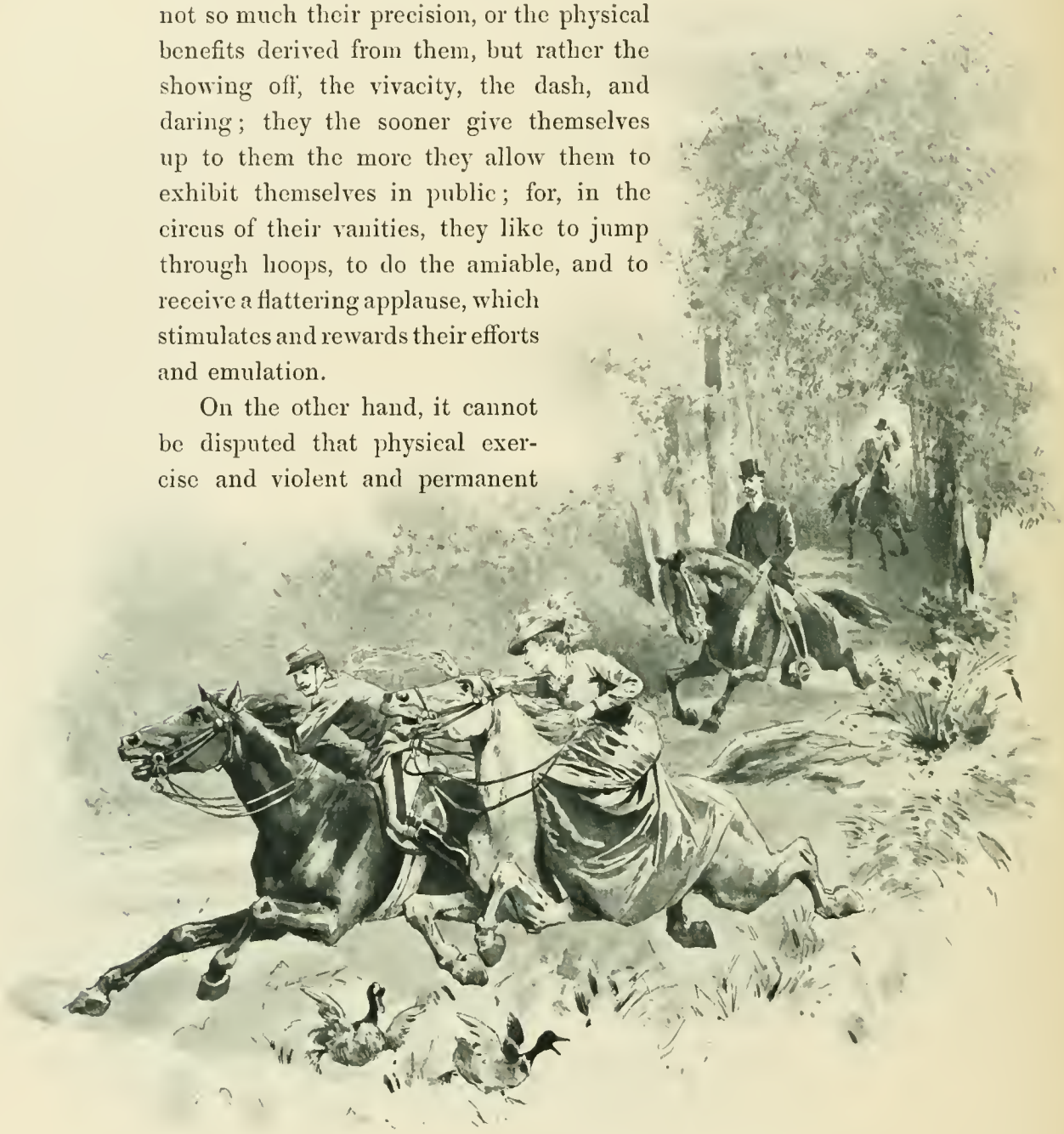
the English; Frenchmen will never have the persevering tenacity, the innate taste of the true English sportsman, whose whole existence is only a reaction, and who work their body like ancient Spartans. Sport in France will never be anything else but the *desport* of the Middle Ages; a temporary pleasure, a physical curiosity, a search after irregular sensations, a momentary recreation; for the French really are too Athenian by nature, too talkative, too fond of extraordinary things, too incoherent, too much inclined to a want of balance to submit to the patient labour, the precise observation, the characteristic study, and the severe laws of the great regularised sports. Their newspapers do not devote ten columns to sporting intelligence, to describe, in the interest of thousands of readers, the exploits of pedestrians, the brilliant performances of sportsmen, the heroic struggles of rowing men on the Seine or the Marne, and all the details of Sporting Life.

They notice at most, and in a few lines, the paper-chases of the officers of the army, carrousel-riding so peculiarly French, the pretty "riband" races and other echoes of fashionable sporting rather belonging to the elegant amusements of country life than to professional sport, which, to speak the truth, does not greatly attract us.

Each division of sport has in Paris its centre, its special establishment, its club, its school, its regulations and its statutes, but

even if every theory were taught there, and every practical science could be acquired, it is quite clear that sport in France is only an exception, and probably will never become acclimatised. What, above all, charms the French in sports, is not so much their precision, or the physical benefits derived from them, but rather the showing off, the vivacity, the dash, and daring; they the sooner give themselves up to them the more they allow them to exhibit themselves in public; for, in the circus of their vanities, they like to jump through hoops, to do the amiable, and to receive a flattering applause, which stimulates and rewards their efforts and emulation.

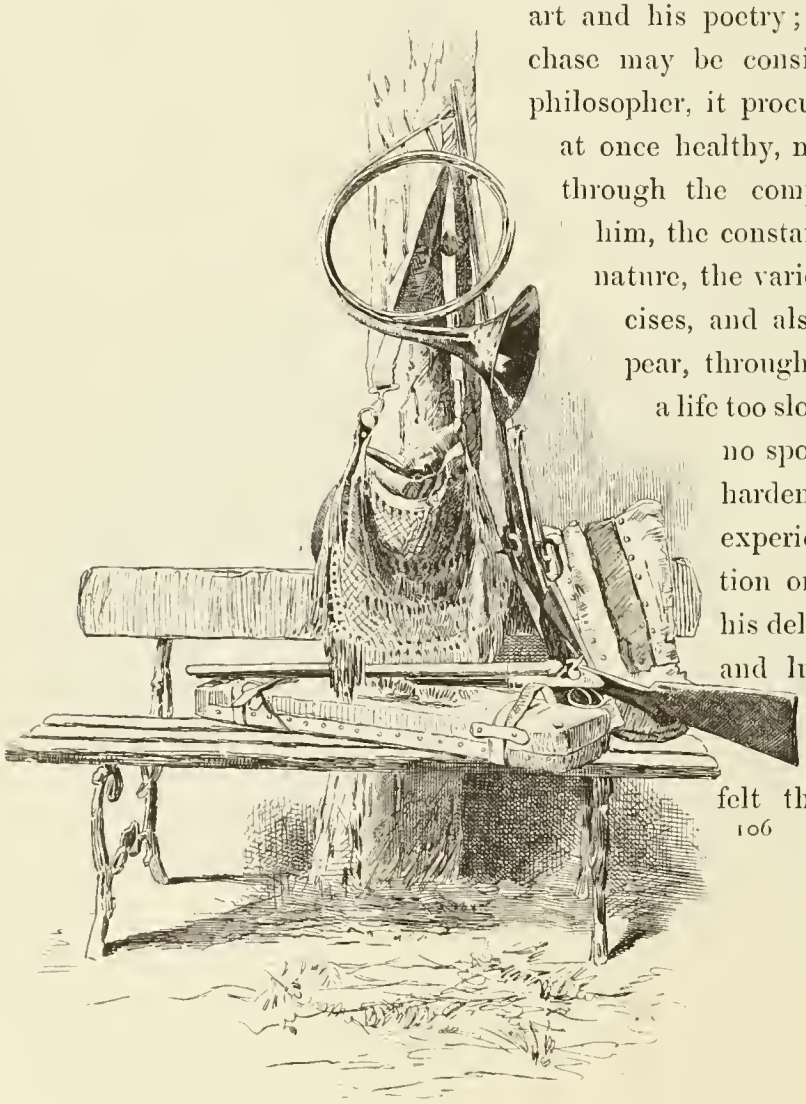
On the other hand, it cannot be disputed that physical exercise and violent and permanent



training is detrimental to the intellect; sport ought only to be a mere derivative, otherwise it absorbs all the grey matter of our brain. If we have not to choose between spiritual and physical culture, we ought at least to grant priority to one of them. Life is so lamentably limited that we should merely be allowed to hypertrophiate by excessive practice some muscles of the body, or only one brain-cell.—A fencer will not box, for it might damage his delicate skill; a horsey man will only go boating to amuse himself; a tennis-player will take care not to handle heavy weights, so as not to spoil his agility; and a wrestler will only devote to the ladies his spare time. Whatever we may do, our vital essence has only one issue; we may waste it away in idle dreams, in artistic expression, in our being haunted by one idea, or in physical fatigue, we shall never succeed in spending it gloriously or nobly without our employing it for a special purpose.—We must exclusively become wedded to one passion, whether it be as Centaurs for a horse, as Tritons for the sea, or become engulfed by the mysteries of thought; the gifted modern man, who prefers to be some one instead of remaining somebody or something, must obey this law which requires us to follow one occupation in preference to any other.

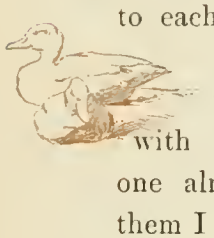
There are, however, some summer sports or independent semi-sports which do not exclude the idyllic muse, the songs of *rêverie*, the reading of Horace or Theocritus: these are

fishing and shooting, carnivorous pleasures which we can still poetise, for a love for the chase is only a remnant of the primitive state of our savage barbarism, and before it became a recreation, the chase was an absolute necessity for man, compelled to provide his food. Grimm is certainly too much of a pessimist when he states that there is no pleasure less worthy of a thinking being than the chase, for the majority of our brave Nimrods only go shooting to exercise their physical strength and their legs. "The most prosaic shot," says George Sand, that literary Rosa Bonheur of rustic life, "the most shallow-brained sportsman, feels a particular charm amidst the mystery of the woods, and the absolute independence of his movements, fancies, and stoppages; it is his art and his poetry;" and, in fact, though the chase may be considered cruel by a morose philosopher, it procures to man an amusement at once healthy, noble, allowable, and moral, through the complete solitude surrounding him, the constant and compulsory study of nature, the various faculties which it exercises, and also, ridiculous as it may appear, through beholding suddenly taken a life too slowly bestowed. There exists no sportsman, however coarse and hardened he may be, who has not experienced some peculiar sensation on perceiving and touching his delicate victims, still breathing and lukewarm, so abruptly surprised in their pretty gambols. Most of them have felt this silent emotion, which



made Boufflers, himself a sportsman, write this pretty note to Madame de Sabran :—

"I am a barbarian, my dear; I have just been shooting some little birds; with one shot I killed two charming turtle-doves. They were on the same tree, looking at each other, speaking to each other, kissing each other, only thinking of love, and death struck them between their gentle eyes. They fell together motionless and without life, their heads bent with a certain sad and touching charm which would make one almost believe they still love after death. Whilst pitying them I envied them; they did not suffer; grief did not kill them; their love did not end in coolness; their poor little souls still flutter perhaps, and caress one another in the air; . . . all this provides food for reflection."

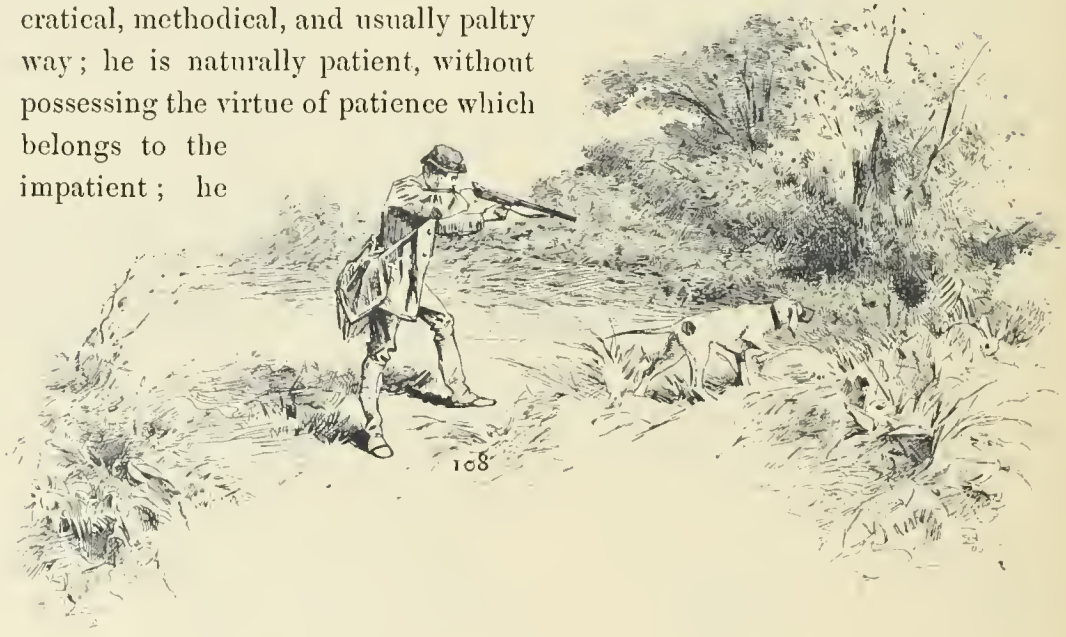


There are few sportsmen in love who have not thought such a letter, if they did not write one, for when out shooting, emotion, tenderness, pity, a vaguely pathetic philosophy, form part of their moral outfit. A sportsman delights in these disturbing sensations, for he is more agitated than when gambling, his heart beats stronger in a less vile combat; he feels the vanity of his useless slaughter, but also the strange intoxication of murder, an intense excitement which thoroughly stirs him up, and suggests to him transcendental and impressive soliloquies like those of Shakespeare's heroes.

Moreover, there is no shooting without a dog, this active, devoted, and faithful animal, this so profoundly honest companion, this unique, sincere friend of man, who watches the departure of sportsmen with such antics of saucy merriment, and

such expressive and friendly wagging of his tail!—the dog, always lively, caressing, attentive to our slightest gestures, familiar with our disposition and habits—the dog, the soul of the chase, who knows how to guide us, either in the plain or the forest, to interest us, to enliven us, to instil in us such a community of inclinations that we almost converse with him; he guides us with his unwavering scent, his cleverness and cunning; he excites us, encourages us, and keeps our attention on the watch, for he is so impetuous, nimble, and indefatigable that he drives away our indolence, and does not give us time to ascertain our fatigue.—Shooting is a highly intense, enticing, and perfect pleasure; it excites in us a thousand opposite sentiments, very varied and absorbing; it trains and strengthens us by our walking in the open air amidst all weathers and on every soil; it accustoms us to the use of arms, and makes us strong and skilful. Shooting, enjoyed by all kinds of Frenchmen, during autumn, has made such headway, that soon, with the help of poachers, there will be more guns than game.

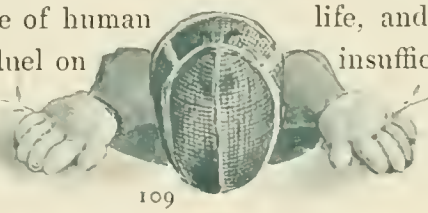
Fishing is, to say the truth, a less noble sport, suitable to a contemplative, dreamy, sly man, who, if he uses a rod, is generally egotistical, fanciful, and fussy; he practises his hobby in a bureaucratical, methodical, and usually paltry way; he is naturally patient, without possessing the virtue of patience which belongs to the impatient; he

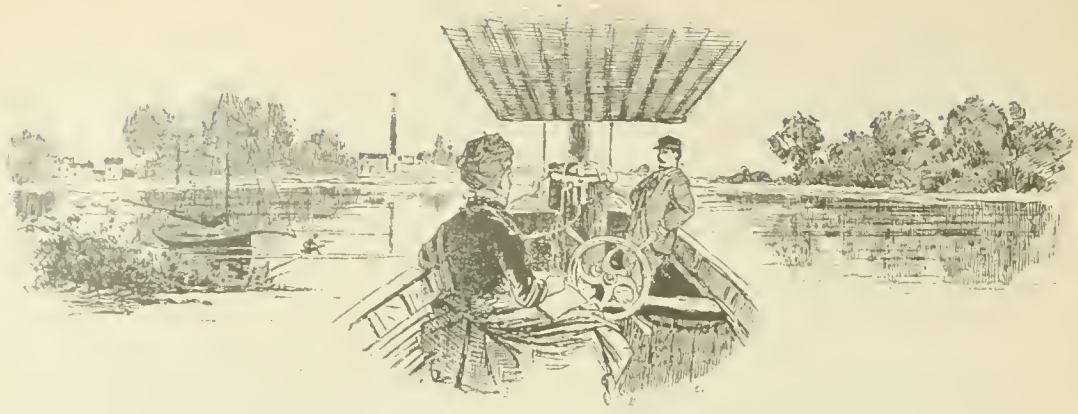


looks for shade and solitude, and affects to be disagreeable and quarrelsome when some one disturbs him in his little, slow, cautious, and trifling operations. A man with a rod is seldom lively, but remains as dumb as the fish he is looking for. Fishing is a sport for people with a "corporation."

Among the sports most suited to the genius of the French race, fencing, which our ancestors called the "noble science," is foremost, because it is traditional, and shows off bravery. Fencing masters in France are as highly valued as the trainers of gladiators were among the Romans. Fencing is practised everywhere, in Paris as well as in the provinces, among civilians and army men; and though only part of the body is exercised, it makes them carry themselves well, and renders them elegant and supple. The French school of fencing is superior to any other through its logical method, its clearness, and its synthetical spirit. Jean Louis' system, which, since the beginning of the Restoration, has renewed so successfully the teaching of fencing, produces the best fencers in the world, and, at present, the French fencing schools are very prosperous, thanks to the high spirits of our contemporaries, who have happily not lost their frantic passion for the noble art of fencing, nor the taste for those brilliant encounters which still remain as the last vestiges of ancient tournaments.

Fencing, long practised, in making us conscious of our force, does not urge us to fight duels, or to provoke people thoughtlessly; on the contrary, it strengthens our coolness and moderation amidst sudden altercations, for we can deliberately ascertain the vanity of futile encounters, and, entrenched in our knowledge of the art, weigh wisely the value of human life, and thus refuse without cowardice a duel on insufficient grounds.



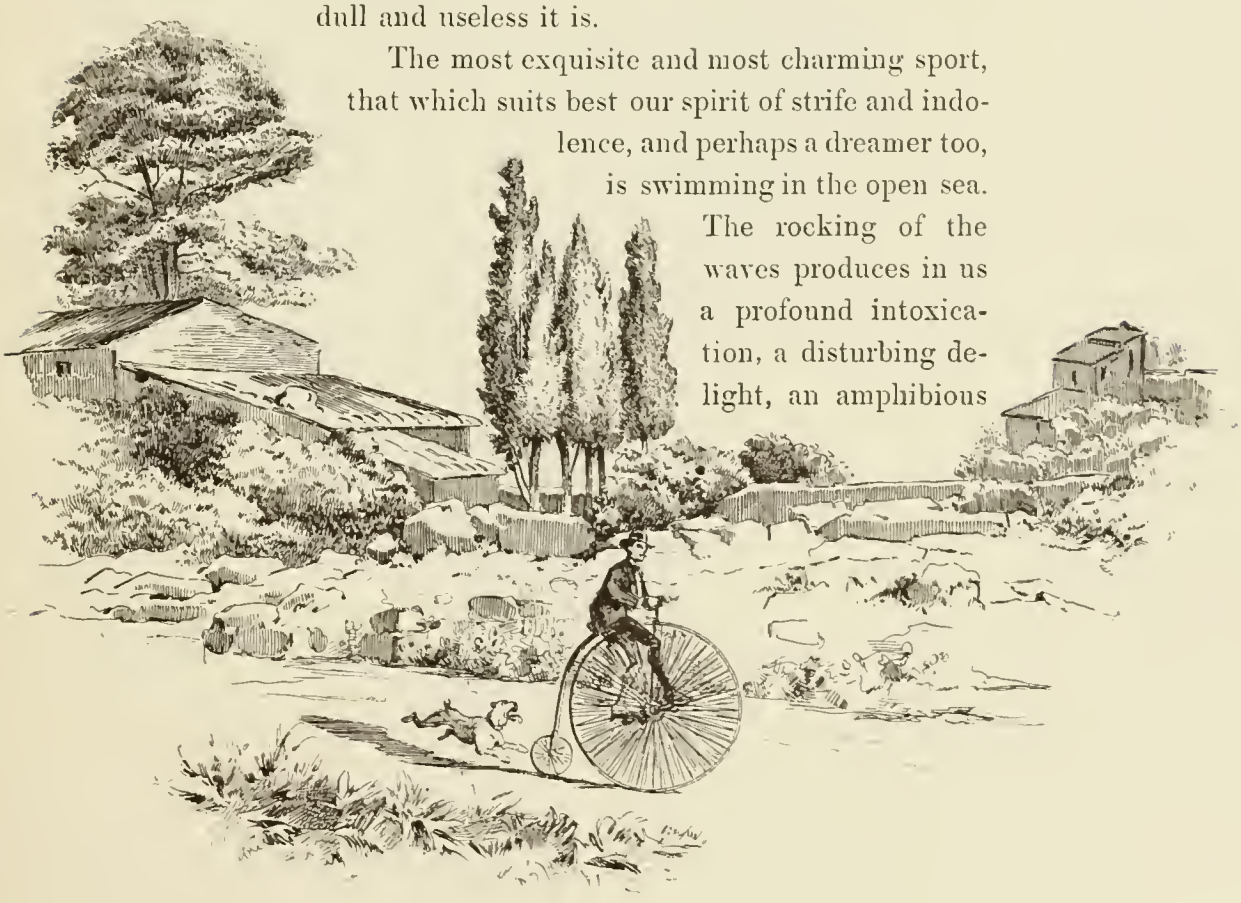


Among the sports of modern creation, the bicycle and tricyle become every day more general. The English take again, in this respect, the lead, for we do not see in France, as in the neighbourhood of London, clubs of cyclists on the move, forming on the high road a line more than a mile long of several hundred people of both sexes. The bicycle and tricycle familiarise us with the laws of physical equilibrium, they actively exercise our crural triceps, and procure to their worshippers fleeting sensations which almost seem like dreams. Cycling, which every day becomes more perfect, may be reckoned among the sports of the future, and its practical interest is so obvious, either for pleasure trips or travelling, that we can well imagine that the next century will behold the omnipotence of this brilliant sport.

Rowing and boating are delicious open-air sports, but their adepts must practise them very exclusively, and be passionately fond of them. If a man wishes to practise them as ardently as Oxford or Cambridge men do, he must allow himself to be dieted according to strict rules, for every excess is forbidden, under penalty of dismissal; he must submit or abdicate, if he wishes to preserve his strength, elasticity, breath, and remain a boating-man, in the noblest acceptation of the word. English oarsmen are, with regard to this, the first in the world. Rowing clubs and sailing clubs are very numerous in England.

The French or Belgian boating-man is somewhat of a roysterer.

He does not practise his favourite sport in silence, with the conviction and fervour of his Northern brethren; he likes to be merry whilst rowing on the Seine or the Meuse, and even to "chaff" the natives; he stops at small inns, lands at some aits to gambol under the willows, is delighted when he can smell the frying of fish or omelets, and willingly sits down in an arbour to digest his food, or to give vent to merry songs and to be noisy.—As for the yachting-man, he is a correct and immensely wealthy gentleman, who likes to air his weariness in a moving prison, in which he only acts as honorary captain. He commands a cook, several servants, and a small crew engaged by the year. He comes on board with joy, and leaves it disgusted and sad; hence there are so few men in France who keep their yacht for several years without letting it out to some other millionaire in search of fashionable pleasure, who will try yachting just long enough to find out how dull and useless it is.



The most exquisite and most charming sport, that which suits best our spirit of strife and indolence, and perhaps a dreamer too, is swimming in the open sea. The rocking of the waves produces in us a profound intoxication, a disturbing delight, an amphibious

comfort which only those powerful Tritons can understand who swim a good distance, far from the crowds on shore, or from the petty bathers who bob about the buoy, and chatter like magpies.—To swim a certain distance through waves fringed with silver, and to be rocked by them, to rest on this thick and soft couch whilst gazing blissfully at the infinity of the Heavens, to be dreaming amidst this immensity and to have the sensation of feeling one's body renovated by these comforting waters, which are somewhat like the fountain of Jouvence, is really to live and to enjoy one's strength; it is to glide in a new world; it is, in short, to move without feeling the weight of one's carnal humanity.

THE TABLE

THE TABLE.

"The pleasures of the table are special to the human race."—BRILLAT-SAVARIN.

"An artist, a scientist, a poet are born, and so is a *gourmand*."—GUY DE MAUPASSANT.

ACCORDING to the opinion of the leaders of gastronomy the alimentary art presents a field of great extent, of which the horizon incessantly retreats before every man who makes it an object of serious study and profound meditation. The *Classics of the Table* tell us that this art, which includes the three kingdoms of Nature, the four quarters of the globe, all moral considerations, all social relations, this art, in short, with which everything is more or less directly and closely connected, only appears superficial to inferior minds, who see in a kitchen nothing but stewpans, and in a dinner naught but dishes

This gastronomic art, of which Alexandre Dumas, Rossini, Baron Brisse, and Monselet are the last representatives, seems somewhat neglected in the latter part of this century; the Parisians

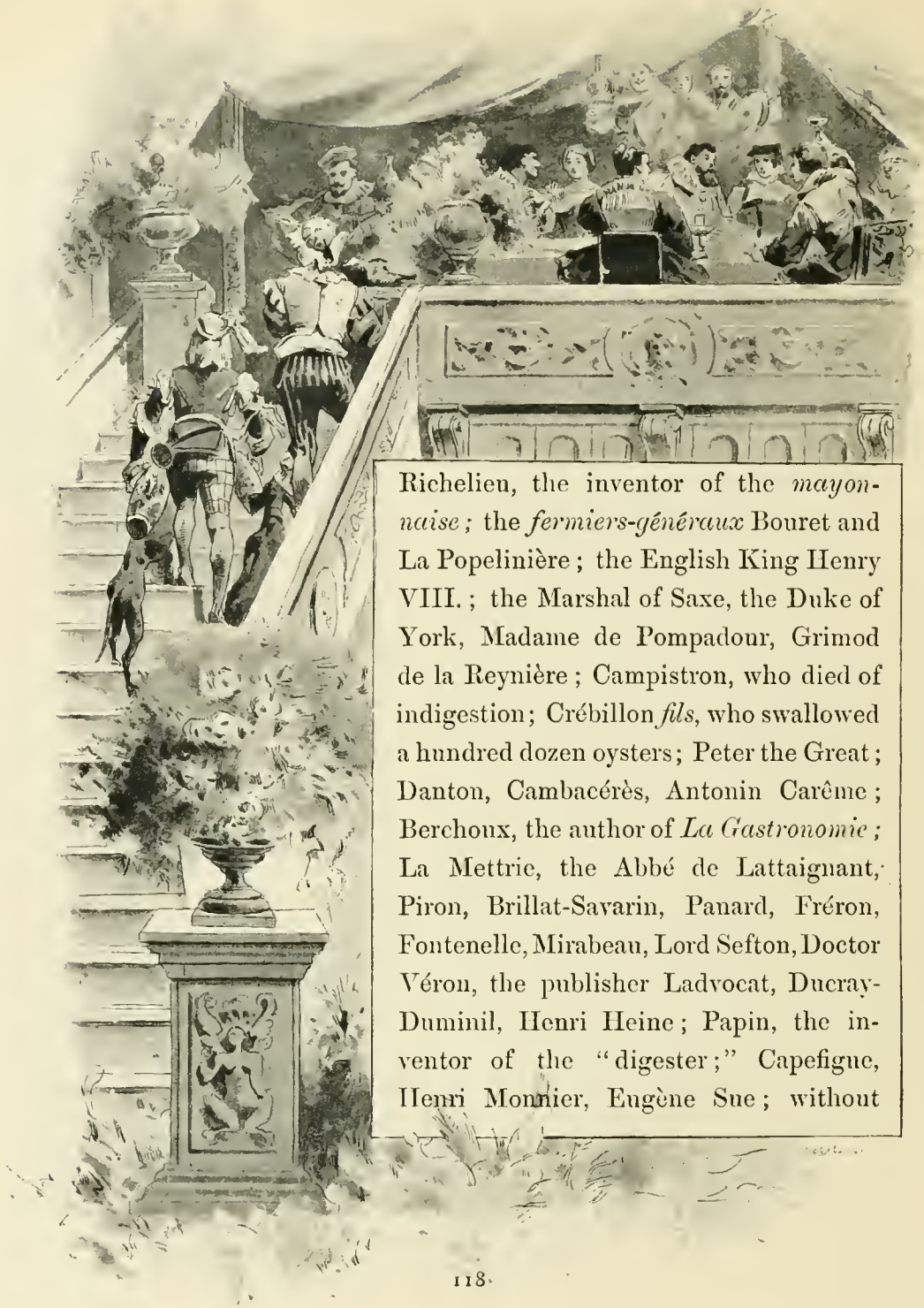
appear to place little value on nutritive invitations; a real *gourmand* becomes rare; every one only cares for his own stomach, and weighs his food; therapeutics are in a fair way completely to destroy gastronomy. In Germany, England, and, above all, in Belgium, and in the provinces of France, there is always plenty on the table, and the eating is so Rabelaisean that Gargantua would have rejoiced on beholding such copious feasts. In the provinces a dinner-party is considered an affair of State; people busy themselves about it two months beforehand, and the *menu* is so well arranged that it takes six weeks at least to digest it. But the busy Parisian, always in a state of agitation, can neither give the same time to his meal nor the same latitude to his digestion; he cannot gorge as a snake, or spend many hours of torpor after his food. The Parisian is as sober as a Turk; he becomes delicate and likes dainties, wants his coffee to be well made, the *entre-mets* to melt in the mouth, and the liqueurs to be choice; but he avoids gluttony, for he often knows by experience that the stomach is our greatest enemy. Moreover, he

is no epicure, and prefers, when at table, the agreeable pleasures of the mind to the sensation of refined eating.

Gastronomy has, however, been lauded in every possible way. Monselet says: "It delights people of every rank and age. It bestows beauty and intellect, it sprinkles golden sparks on the humid azure of our eyes, it gives to our lips a bright coral colour, it pushes our hair back, makes our nostrils quiver intelligently, and, above all, develops in us urbanity and politeness.

"Attacking every sense at once, gastronomy contains all poetry —the poetry of sound and colour, of taste and smell, the sovereign poetry of touch. It is sweet with the wood-strawberries, the grapes from the vines, the enticing cherries, the velvety peaches, and powerful with the startled deer and the dazzling pheasants; it ranges from the most unbridled materialism to the most exquisite spiritualism, from Pontoise to Malaga, from Beaune to Johannisberg; it loves the blood of the leverets and the racy gold, the gold poured out from flasks of Sauterne."

A history of gastronomy would be somewhat like one of Love, a history of humanity, for in the Golden Book of celebrated epicures are to be found the most extraordinary names: Sardanapalus, Heliogabalus, Lucullus, Cleopatra, Petronius, Tiberius, Belshassar, Anacreon, Apicius, Vitellius, Martin Luther, the Emperor Julian, St. Gregory, Plutarch, the Emperor Geta, Mæcenas, Pope Sergius IV.; Hippocrates, who prescribed indigestion instead of purgatives; Xenophon, the legislator of banquets; Cato, Louis the Fat, Francis I., Henri IV. and Louis XIV., Philip of Orleans, the Marshal de



Richelieu, the inventor of the *mayonnaise;* the *fermiers-généraux* Bouret and La Popelinière; the English King Henry VIII.; the Marshal of Saxe, the Duke of York, Madame de Pompadour, Grimod de la Reynière; Campistron, who died of indigestion; Crébillon *fils*, who swallowed a hundred dozen oysters; Peter the Great; Danton, Cambacérès, Antonin Carême; Berchoux, the author of *La Gastronomie;* La Mettrie, the Abbé de Lattaignant, Piron, Brillat-Savarin, Panard, Fréron, Fontenelle, Mirabeau, Lord Sefton, Doctor Véron, the publisher Ladvocat, Ducray-Duminil, Henri Heine; Papin, the inventor of the "digester;" Capefigue, Henri Monnier, Eugène Sue; without

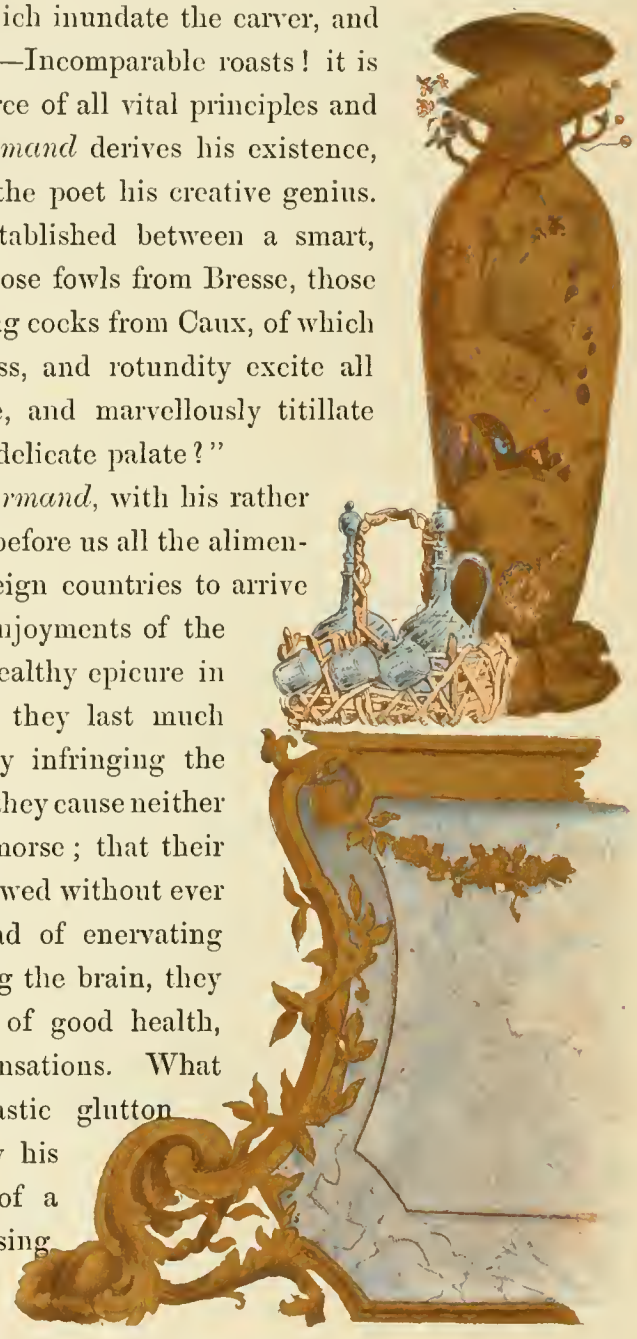
counting Cadmus, a cook and a king, Esop, a cook, and Vatel, the unfortunate victim of his art and punctuality.—And this list is far from complete.

Gastronomy can become an absorbing passion, excelling all other sensations, and Grimod de la Reynière relates in his *Almanachs des Gourmands* that a disciple of Apicius one day bethought himself of establishing a comparison between women and good cheer.

"Let us first lay down our principle," he said; "you will admit that the pleasures of the table are the soonest acquired, the latest left off, and most often enjoyed. Now, can you say as much of other pleasures?

"However handsome you may think a woman, even if she were a Mademoiselle Georges or a Madame Recamier, is she worth these admirable partridges of Cahors, Languedoc, or the Cevennes of which the divine odour is better than all the perfumes of Arabia? Would you draw a parallel between her and these *pâtés de foie gras* or *de canards* to which Strasburg, Toulouse, and Auch owe the best part of their reputation? What is she compared to the stuffed tongues of Troyes, the Lyon's *mortadella*, the Paris brawn, or the sausages from Arles or Bologna, which have procured so much glory to the pig? Can you place her pretty little painted and grinning face by the side of these admirable sheep of the Vosges or the Ardennes, which melt in the mouth, and are delect-

able to munch?—What *gourmand* is depraved enough to prefer a lean and wretched fair girl to those enormous and juicy sirloins from the Limagne or the Cotentin, which inundate the carver, and delight those who eat them?—Incomparable roasts! it is from your vast sides, the source of all vital principles and real sensations, that the *gourmand* derives his existence, the musician his talent, and the poet his creative genius. What connection can be established between a smart, irregular featured face and those fowls from Bresse, those capons from Mans, those young cocks from Caux, of which the delicacy, beauty, juiciness, and rotundity excite all the senses at the same time, and marvellously titillate the sensitive nerves of every delicate palate?"



Thus this paradoxical *gourmand*, with his rather vulgar appetite, makes defile before us all the alimentary riches of France and foreign countries to arrive at the conclusion that the enjoyments of the table must be placed by a wealthy epicure in the foremost rank, and that they last much longer than those enjoyed by infringing the Seventh Commandment; that they cause neither languor, disgust, fear, nor remorse; that their source can be incessantly renewed without ever being exhausted; that instead of enervating the temperament or weakening the brain, they become the happy principle of good health, brilliant ideas, and vigorous sensations. What can we think of this fantastic glutton who has made of gastronomy his sole passion and the ideal of a busy life? Instead of causing

regret, of predisposing to hypochondria, and ending by making a man unbearable to himself and everybody else, we owe to it, he says, a cheerful face, the distinctive mark of all followers of Comus, so different from the pale and wan visage, the ordinary characteristic of bashful lovers.

A *gourmand* is indeed often a misogynist and egotistical. Inviting himself to his own table, as Lucullus did, he voluptuously enjoys the dishes served up; we feel he is absorbed in masticating and tasting, talking inwardly to himself about the qualities of his food; indifferent to externals, sometimes bent over his plate, sometimes leaning backwards, a smile on his sensuous lips, his eyes sparkling, he is monstrously happy in his voluntary solitude. A *gourmand* always bears on his face the stamp of his egotistical sensuality; whether he be a Chinese making tea, an Arab eating rice, an Italian sniffing macaroni, or an Englishman swallowing his pudding, every lover of good cheer always has a peculiarly good-natured expression, but also an impress of some absorbing, innate, and interested personality, full of gastric subjectivity. "The soul of a *gourmand*," says J. J. Rousseau, "is wholly in his palate; he can do nothing but eat; stupidly incapable, his sole place is at table; he can only judge of dishes, and we'll leave him to do this."

According to the dictionary of the French Academy, *gourmand*, *goulu*, and *glouton* are synonymous words. All epicures protest against this definition, which does not seem to them exact, for the epithets "glutton" and "guzzler" should characterise intemperance and insatiable greediness. They

argue that the word *gourmand* should bear in society a less unfavourable and much higher meaning, for a *gourmand* is not merely a being endowed by nature with an excellent stomach and a vast appetite—all strong and well-constituted men have this—but, on the contrary, he is often a man with a not very strong stomach, who possesses an exquisite taste, of which the first principle is a singularly delicate palate, matured by long experience. All the senses, they maintain, should be, in a *gourmand*, in constant harmony with taste, for he must reason judiciously before bringing any morsel to his lips. Therefore his glance should be piercing, his hearing quick, his taste refined, and his tongue in good order.

It would be an error to believe, they add, that this continual attention of a *gourmand* to all divisions of the alimentary art, towards which his sensations are exclusively directed, will make him materialistic and stupid; more than any other man he can be amiable, and make his superiority be pardoned by sober men, usually envious. Roubaud, in his *Synonyms*, is tempted to take the side of the gastronome, for he deigns to compare the gormandiser, the guzzler, the glutton, and the *gourmand*. He says: "A *gourmand* likes choice morsels, and is fond of good cheer. A gormandiser has such a tremendous appetite that he eats as much as he can, crams and gluts himself with everything, and swallows rather than eats. A guzzler only tears and swallows his food; he does not chew, but gobbles it, bolts it, and stuffs himself. The glutton

hurries to feed, makes a disagreeable noise whilst eating, and is so voracious that he swallows one morsel after another until everything has disappeared; one would say that he gulps them down."

Other philologists distinguish again between a *gourmand* and an epicure, bestowing on the latter all the science and tact they refuse to the former. Quarrels also arise on all sides as to the choice of food; some think, with Helvetius, in his book *De l'Esprit*, that man is essentially a carnivorous animal; others think, with J. J. Rousseau and Lamartine, that a man feeding on flesh is a depraved animal; some are vegetarians, others water-drinkers, and generally people are agreed on this point, that man is omnivorous, and can choose his food in the animal as well as in the vegetable kingdom; that everything that pleases him suits his organisation, and that this happy faculty, a true gift of nature, is scarcely modified by the influence of climate, manners, and customs.

Cabanis remarks that in countries where the poorer classes feed on coarse food, their intelligence is more dense, and all travellers agree that among savage tribes, whose manners have not become modified by political organisation, those whose principal food is flesh have more intelligence and activity than the tribes who only live on vegetables.

Culinary art, already so delicate in the suppers and collations of the eighteenth century, rapidly moved towards its apogee when a constitutional government was established in France. Since 1815, after people had been weakened by twenty years troubles, wars, and conquests, they felt the necessity of acquiring a richer blood, and the Restoration merited its name in the opinion of all

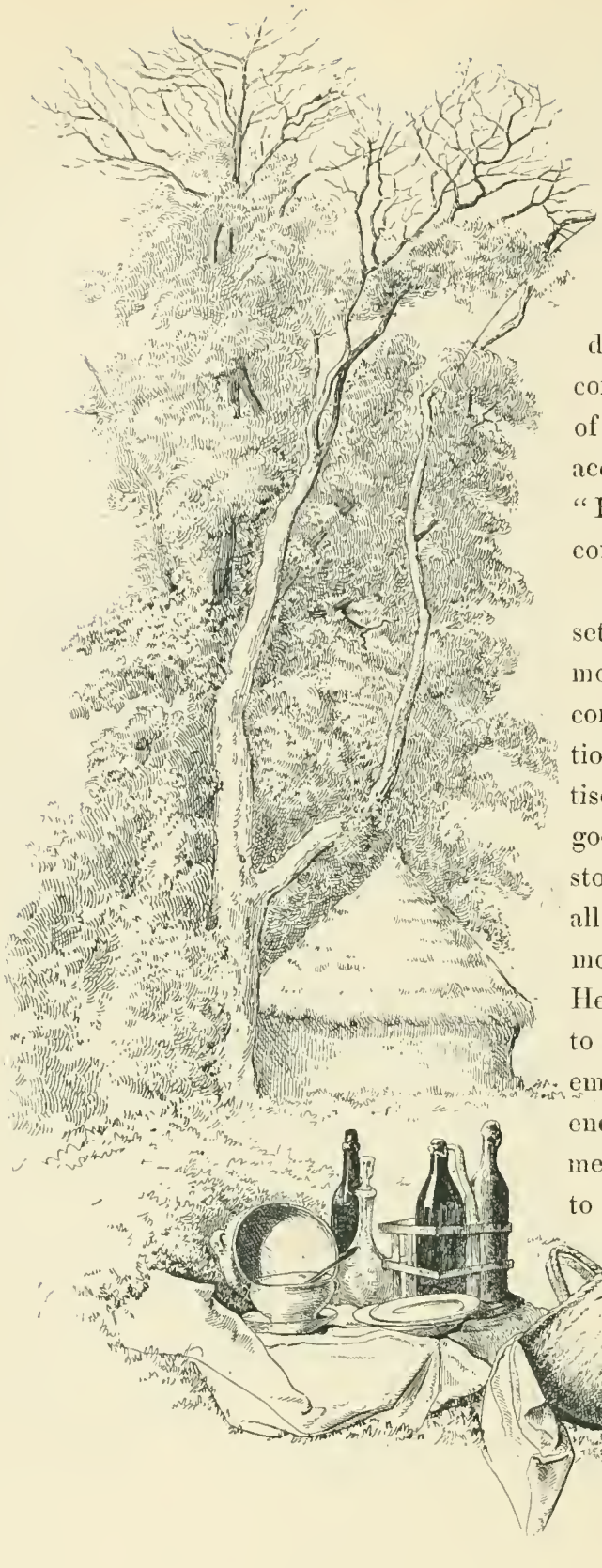
those who affirm that great thoughts rise from the stomach. Gastronomy was then in its full glory, and a *gourmand* sauntering through Paris could rest at some remarkable restaurants—such as Véry, the *Frères provençaux*, the *Café anglais*, the *Café Corazza*, Véfour, Carchi, the *Rocher de Cancale*, the *Bœuf à la Mode*, Bignon, Le Doyen (then on the *Place Louis XV.*), Magny, the *Quatre Sergents de la Rochelle*, and a score more who well deserved their celebrity amidst a population of refined epicures, of which the type is gradually disappearing.

When sometimes we stray in one of those old solitary restaurants of the Palais Royal we feel the solemnity of these ancient feasts; we imagine that the souls of former epicures still haunt these quiet rooms, wainscoted with white and gold panels, with their dwarf-curtains, and their mahogany furniture inlaid in the Dutch fashion. Everything there is grave, pompous, ceremonious, and imposing, from the majestic barmaid with her ancient and handsome hair flat in bands who solemnly rings a bell, to the head-waiters and cellarmen so dignified in the exercise of their functions.—Nothing seems more cold, sad, and dull to us moderns, swallowing our meals as quickly as possible at the usual bars, amidst the hurry of our busy life; but the provincials, who often come to Paris to feast, crowd in family parties those well-known houses of good repute, so respectable that people whisper there rather than talk loud, amidst a silence drizzling with sadness and the rankness of the past.

These ancient Parisian restaurants, built and furnished for a slow and toothsome mastication, the worship of good cheer, the quiet labour of digestion, demonstrate to us merely by looking at them, better than all speeches, the singular revolution produced in our manners during half a century. Evidently the pleasures of the table have undergone a change; people do not enjoy them more as placidly, carefully, and silently; we care less for what we eat, and we discuss with more indifference the theory of culinary preparations; we no longer pretend, as was done half a century ago, that cookery, as well as the drama, should obey the rules of Aristotle, and that a *gourmand* should only spend the day in eating one long meal, which ought to have an opening, a plot, and ending, and be divided in three supreme acts — breakfast, dinner, and supper.

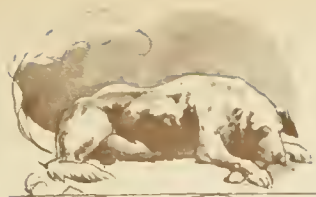
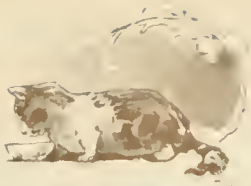
Only in the old French provinces is the Aristotlean rule still put into practice, and three meals occupy all the æsthetics of the day.

During the early part of this century good cheer was greatly liked, and the culinary art was really worshipped; people breakfasted as if they were not going to dine, and dined as if they had had no breakfast; the table was the prime motor of the vast mechanism of business; politics, literature, gallantry, and commerce needed its assistance,—no nominations, promotions, business, love-affairs without eating; the Amphitryons and Alcmenas were never more feasted or honoured, the magistrates distinguished themselves by their gulosity, and more than one minister became popular through being a *gourmand*.—White-meat and dark-meat dinners were invented, the latter composed of gravy and hare soups, brown stews,



mince-meat, hotch-potch, and a hundred other dishes; the first scientifically arranged of *Béchamels*, forced meat-balls, stewed fowls, minced cucumbers, raised pies, poultry stuffed with cock's-combs, and many other dainty dishes slowly planned, which conciliated the appetite of the epicures of the classical and modern schools, according to the gastronomic saying, "Before everything hunger has to be considered."

The prerogatives of a host were then settled by rules which made him the monarch of the table; his duties were complicated; he had to carve and apportion the principal dishes, strictly practise the laws of hospitality, attend, as a good family man, to the comfort of the stomachs intrusted to his care; above all, reassure the timid, encourage the modest, and jovially challenge the strong. He had to keep order at table, never to allow a plate or a glass to be full or empty, never to risk a doubtful word, to endeavour to bring out the intellect and merriment of his guests, and to take care to place his guests beforehand according to their different characters. He alone had to propose toasts, and every one was then

obliged to empty his glass. To the many codes then governing France was added the *Code gourmand*, based on the idea that Gastronomy ruled the world, was friendly to aristocracies and republics, supported constitutional states, and amidst the successive upheavals of civilisation, had so greatly increased its power, that it was urgent to settle the attributes of this cosmopolitan ruler by a fixed and immovable code.

Its first meditation was: "Man is a sublime still.—In short, all sensations, actions, passions, imagination, in the admirable mechanism called a body, have only one aim—digestion!"

"Brillat-Savarin has resolutely justified gastronomy," writes Balzac, "but perhaps he has not sufficiently insisted on the pleasure man feels when eating;—digestion, whilst employing all human forces, constitutes an inward battle, which, amongst epicures, is equal to the highest enjoyments of love; we feel our vital capacities so largely developed that the brain is annihilated to the advantage of the second brain placed in the diaphragm, and we become intoxicated by the inertness of all our faculties."

There are still in Paris a good many *gourmands* who can analyse on themselves this observation of Balzac; but certainly epicures become rarer, the taste and science of cookery disappear before the invading progress of chemistry, and also through a vague terror of the guests whom certain medical methods condemn to noble sobriety. People do no longer venture to taste freely of every dish; they take care, fear to spoil their digestion, and lay their stomach somewhat under an interdict.—The *Physiologie du Goût* is neglected, and if things go on as they do, thanks to the

quackery of physicians smitten with fashionable theories, thanks to all kinds of falsification, and also to the ever-increasing manufacture of universal remedies, it will not be astonishing if some clever literary man—if there remain any in the twentieth century—publishes *the* book which will attract all his contemporaries, namely, *The Physiology of Disgust: Meditations of Transcendental Indigestion*, a theoretical, historical, and quite modern work, dedicated to the finical Parisian dyspeptics.

RENOIR

THE RÊVERIE.

"Thought is the labour of intelligence, the *Rêverie* is its voluptuousness."—VICTOR HUGO.

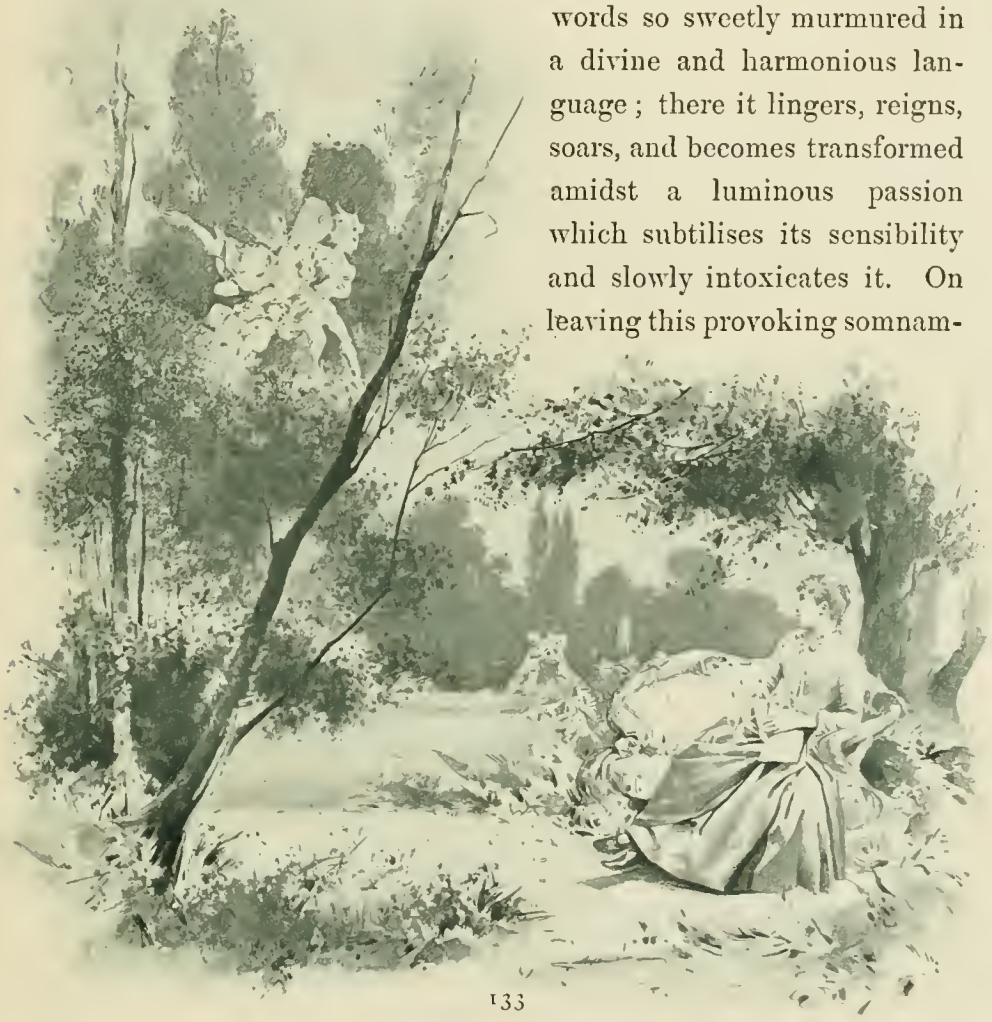
SAINT FRANCOIS DE SALES, speaking of *rêveries* and visions, justly observes that women in general are more inclined than men to ecstasies of the brain: "The facile and tender imagination of girls," he says, "renders them susceptible of illusions. That is why their sex is more inclined to believe in dreams, to fear sin, and to be deceived by superstitions. They often think that they see what they do not see, hear what they do not hear, feel what they do not feel. It is possible that the evil spirit contributes to these illusions, but I am inclined to believe that he allows the imagination to act, and only aids it by mere suggestions."

"It cannot be doubted," as Charron wrote in his book *On Wisdom*, "that the imagination of women often needs more a guide

than a spur, and that it is a disobedient child to be held in leading-strings, for fear it should stumble." —The imagination of a man is much more clogged; it only gambols when he is alone, in repose, during a *rêverie* near the fire, or between the halts of his busy life; it opens to his mind, fatigued by its limited occupations, the brilliant and infinite domain of fancy, and impresses on the brain the invisible and the impenetrable, though they do not always tyrannise over it.—In each of us, as Sainte-Beuve observes, is to be found "that lame alliance of an exalted ideal and of positive and humdrum common sense; with many it is only a question of age;" we go to sleep a Don Quixote, and we awake a Sancho Panza. Our mind, like a balloon, after having foolishly hovered in the air, driven about by a cyclone of the most extravagant thoughts, comes down heavy, soiled, and limp, feeling all the weight of its rationalistic and human ballast.

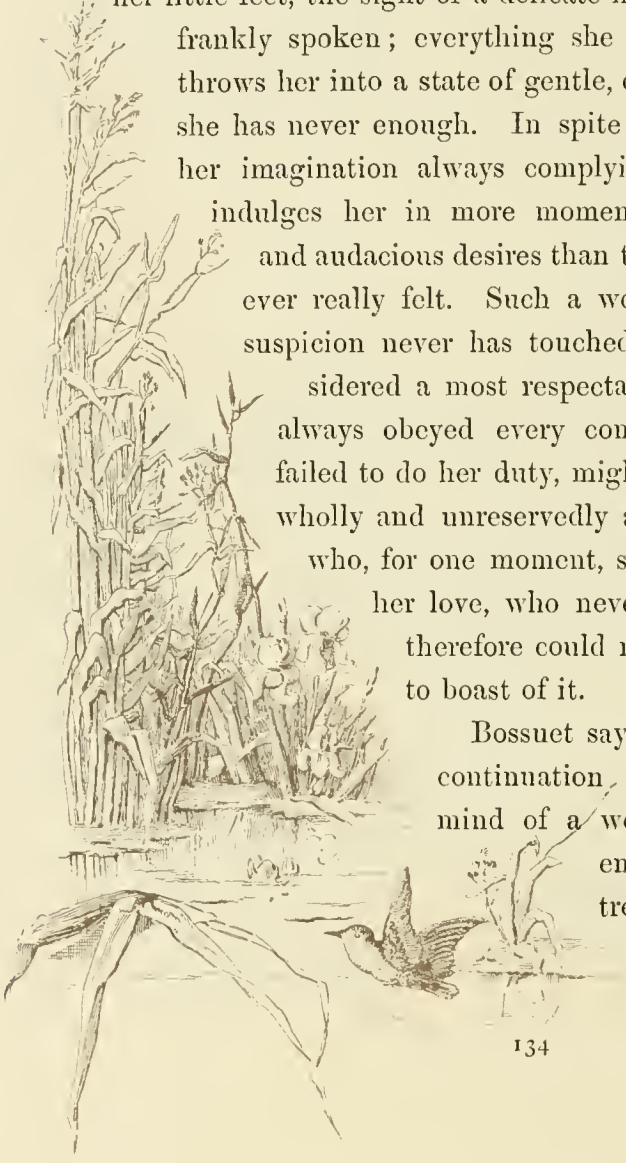
But for women, rendered more passive by social conventionalities, whose mind nature and education have less firmly balanced, for whom love is the whole of life, and who, feeling that they are slaves as daughters, wives, and mothers, are only the more anxious for liberty; for these Cinderellas, the housekeepers or the dolls of the egotistical and busy providers of the family, a *rêverie* is the safety-valve, the magic key which admits to the Edens and Eldorados

which they delight to inhabit, and deck with their sensations, sentiments, and their sensitiveness too often repelled. The prison in which their soul languishes is draped with *rêveries*, and thinking itself free, it takes a prodigious and inordinate leap. Then the soul flies to dreamland, to a mysterious world filled with strange gleams and voices, to those warm countries whence it seems exiled, where it thaws before its worshipped ideal, to become animated amidst intangible sylphs, charmed by words so sweetly murmured in a divine and harmonious language; there it lingers, reigns, soars, and becomes transformed amidst a luminous passion which subtilises its sensibility and slowly intoxicates it. On leaving this provoking somnam-

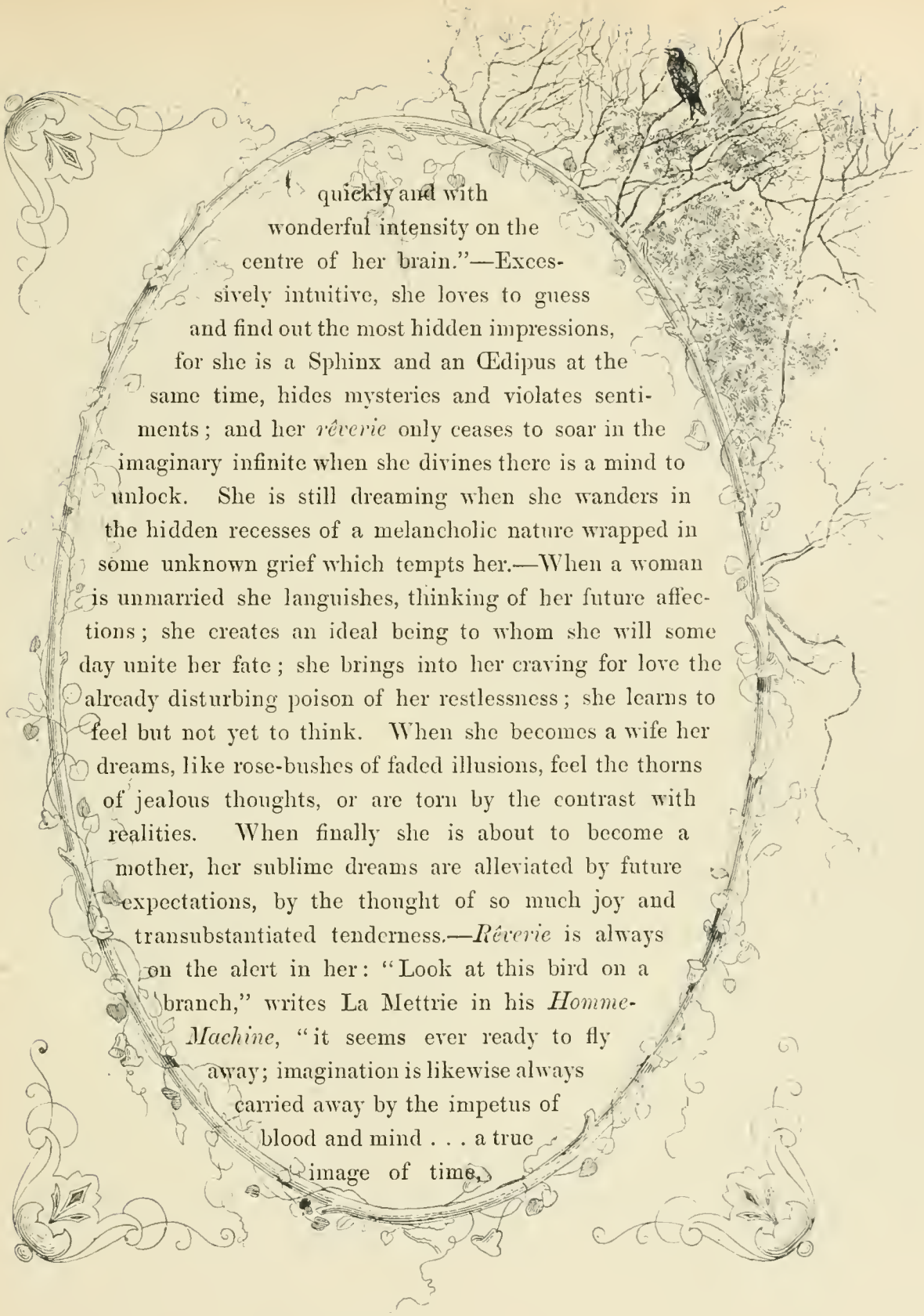


bulism, reality, therefore, startles women, and the compulsory return of the erratic soul puts on the face of so many of them a deep impress of melancholy, like some sad lines of *Paradise Lost*.

Everything is to a woman an excuse for *rêverie;* the book she has looked at, which brought her mind into contact with a suggestive idea, made her start for the ideal; the visit she has just received, an unknown perceived the day before, a print looked at carelessly, the flickering flame of the hearth by which she warms her little feet, the sight of a delicate flower, the sound of a word frankly spoken; everything she looks at, touches, smells, throws her into a state of gentle, dreamy catalepsy, of which she has never enough. In spite of her undoubted virtue, her imagination always complying with her inclinations, indulges her in more momentary caprices, love-affairs, and audacious desires than the most impudent females ever really felt. Such a woman, whom the slightest suspicion never has touched, and who is rightly considered a most respectable wife and mother, who always obeyed every conventional law and never failed to do her duty, might, in some distant *rêverie*, wholly and unreservedly abandon herself to a man who, for one moment, she deigned to enrich with her love, who never even suspected it, and therefore could not even be foolish enough to boast of it.



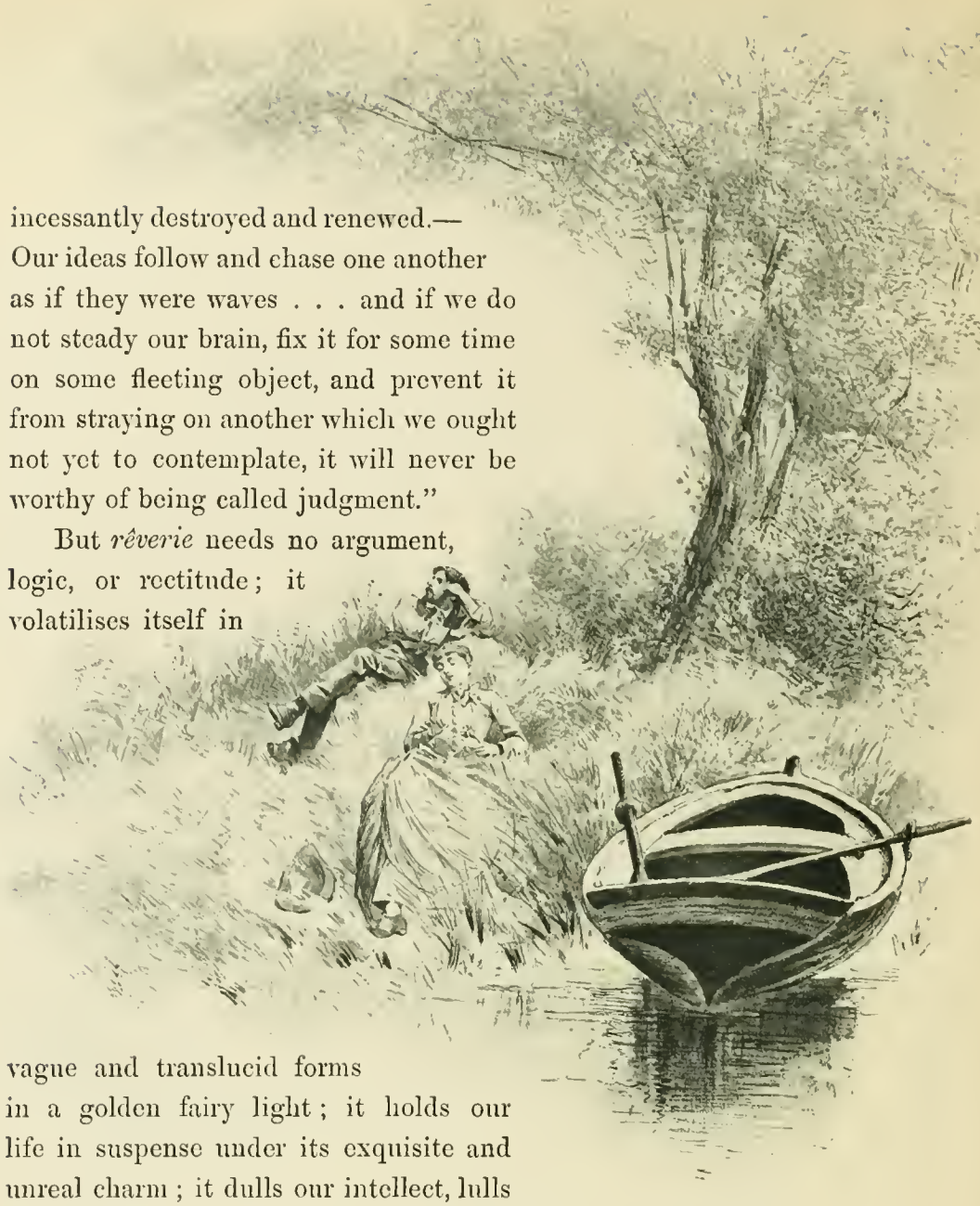
Bossuet says rightly: "*Rêverie* is the continuation of a sensation, and the mind of a woman so quickly becomes emotional, and runs to extremes that her sensations, every moment excited, act



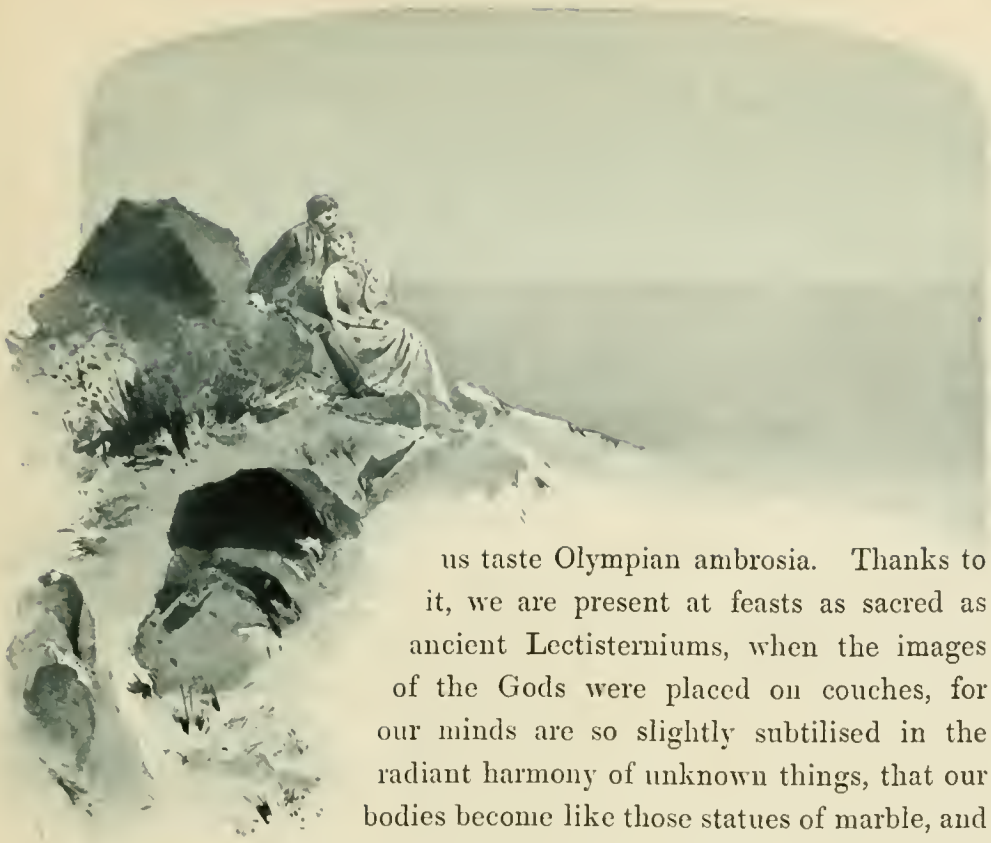
quickly and with wonderful intensity on the centre of her brain."—Excessively intuitive, she loves to guess and find out the most hidden impressions, for she is a Sphinx and an Œdipus at the same time, hides mysteries and violates sentiments; and her *rêverie* only ceases to soar in the imaginary infinite when she divines there is a mind to unlock. She is still dreaming when she wanders in the hidden recesses of a melancholic nature wrapped in some unknown grief which tempts her.—When a woman is unmarried she languishes, thinking of her future affections; she creates an ideal being to whom she will some day unite her fate; she brings into her craving for love the already disturbing poison of her restlessness; she learns to feel but not yet to think. When she becomes a wife her dreams, like rose-bushes of faded illusions, feel the thorns of jealous thoughts, or are torn by the contrast with realities. When finally she is about to become a mother, her sublime dreams are alleviated by future expectations, by the thought of so much joy and transubstantiated tenderness.—*Rêverie* is always on the alert in her: "Look at this bird on a branch," writes La Mettrie in his *Homme-Machine*, "it seems ever ready to fly away; imagination is likewise always carried away by the impetus of blood and mind . . . a true image of time."

incessantly destroyed and renewed.—Our ideas follow and chase one another as if they were waves . . . and if we do not steady our brain, fix it for some time on some fleeting object, and prevent it from straying on another which we ought not yet to contemplate, it will never be worthy of being called judgment."

But *rêverie* needs no argument, logic, or rectitude; it volatilises itself in



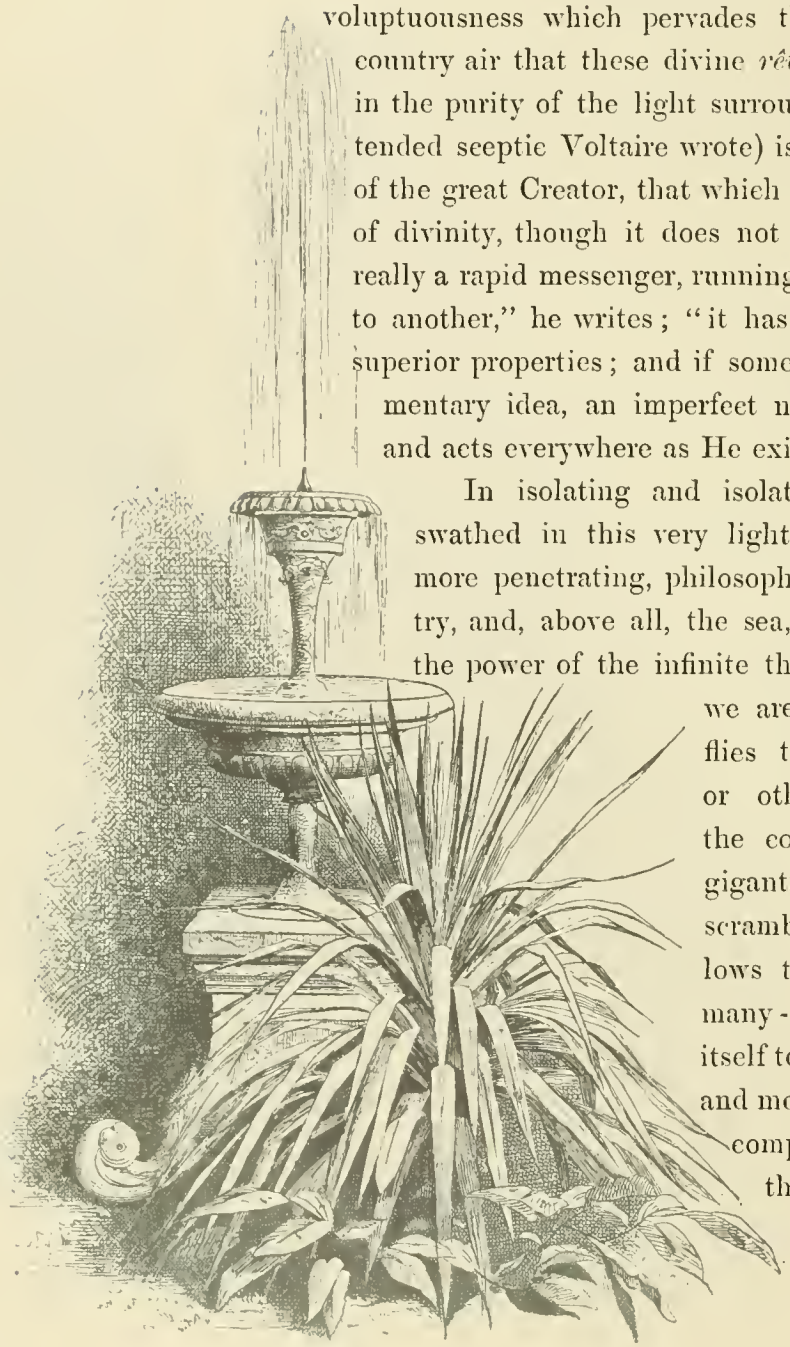
vague and translucid forms in a golden fairy light; it holds our life in suspense under its exquisite and unreal charm; it dulls our intellect, lulls our feelings, and, above all, sends to sleep our reasoning. It carries us far away into countries without a name, where our loosened souls freely hover like those angels' heads with wings always beheld in the transfigurations of depicted Christian art; it makes us soar in a world of odoriferous flowers, offering us their corollas to be kissed; it gives us theurgical sensations, and lets



us taste Olympian ambrosia. Thanks to it, we are present at feasts as sacred as ancient Lectisterniums, when the images of the Gods were placed on couches, for our minds are so slightly subtilised in the radiant harmony of unknown things, that our bodies become like those statues of marble, and only represent all that is divine in them, bathed and purified in the depths of our soul.

Then, if love beatifies us side by side, in the same tenderness, our united *rêveries* mount upwards in the infinite as a prayer of two voices—a prayer of grateful intoxication to the grand All surrounding us, a blessed prayer hovering over nature in love, over the sea, that infinite enchantress always murmuring or sighing, over these mysterious woods; a prayer rising from the blade of grass to the mountain, and from the mountain to the joyful sun.—At this hour, when two souls are united in a pilgrimage towards a happiness lasting longer than *for ever*, when the lips are no longer glued together, but open wide before the abyss of eternity, when two hands unclasp as if tired of this finite expression, at this disturbing moment when two lovers, uneasy at feeling so soon the limits of restrained human caresses, endeavour to break the circle

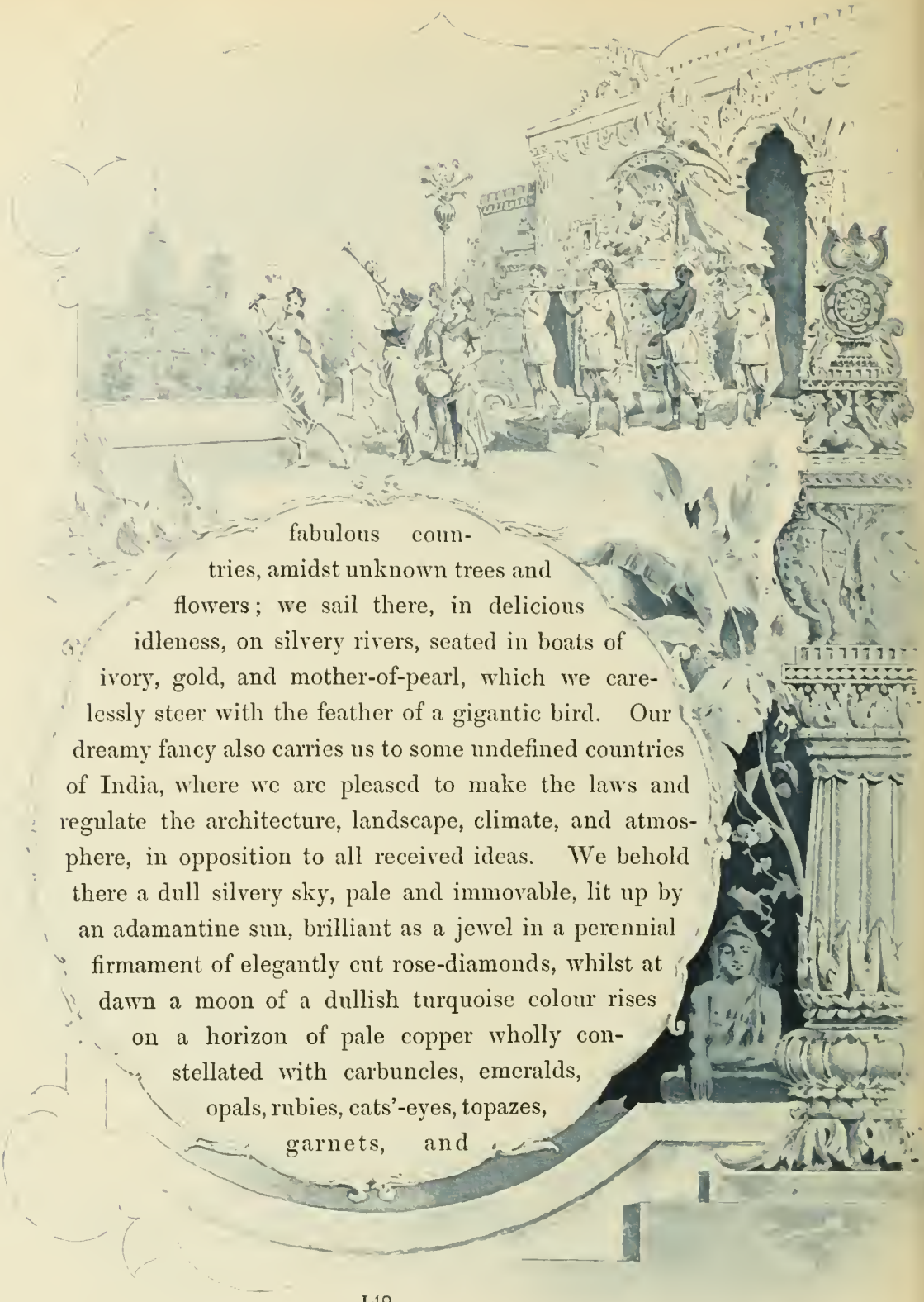
of the impossible to attain a more perfect union, their *rêverie* springs from their very powerlessness, and seems to wish to take from the stars an immutable light, to symbolise the immutable voluptuousness which pervades them.—But it is, above all, in country air that these divine *rêveries* carry us beyond ourselves, in the purity of the light surrounding us, for light (as that pretended sceptic Voltaire wrote) is, of all creations or of all ways of the great Creator, that which gives us the most extended idea of divinity, though it does not represent it by far. "Light is really a rapid messenger, running in the universe from one world to another," he writes; "it has some properties of matter and superior properties; and if something can give us a feeble, elementary idea, an imperfect notion of God, it is light; it is and acts everywhere as He exists and acts."



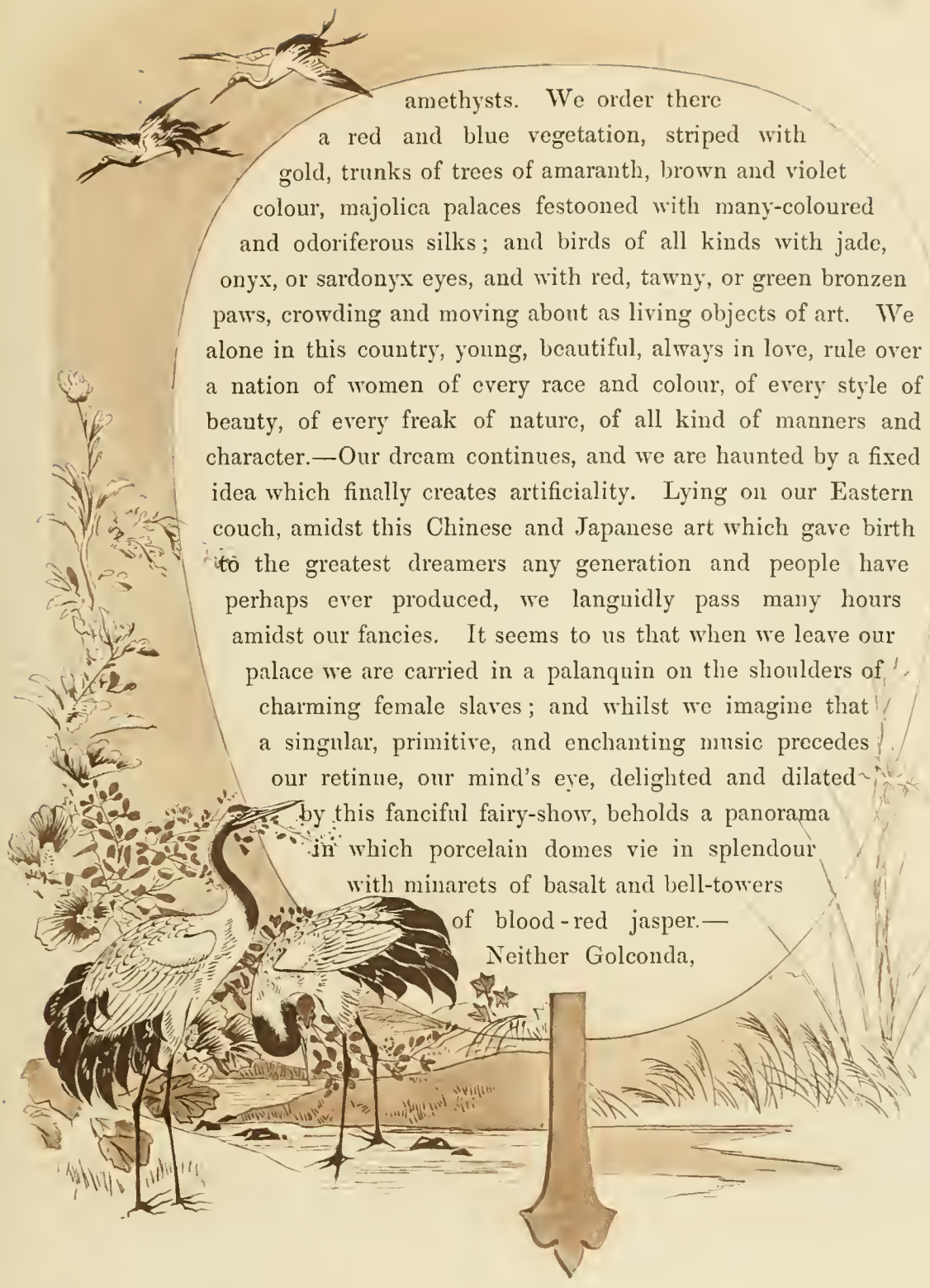
In isolating and isolated nature, our *rêveries*, when swathed in this very light, take characteristics infinitely more penetrating, philosophical, and healthy, for the country, and, above all, the sea, give to our delighted eyes all the power of the infinite they reflect.—When in the fields, we are lying on the grass, our mind flies towards a plurality of worlds, or otherwise becomes involved in the contemplation of an ant-hill, a gigantic Babylon, where a whole nation scrambles to get work; again it follows the irregular flight of nimble, many-coloured butterflies, or allows itself to be charmed by the melancholic and monotonous cooing of doves, those companions of Venus. The sea, on the contrary, does not only give

us a discouraging feeling of the immense, but also impresses us with an incommensurable purity with which it saturates us. We seem to see before us, in the transparent sea-green of this virgin water, in this pure and endless sky swept by the breeze, in this vivifying and healthy air, the picture of an earthly purgatory, cleansing, purifying, and transforming all human pollutions. The eyes become clear and bright on beholding the immense; the soul is cleansed, so to say, and consoled and hopeful; it is a general remedy for our morals, an abstergent for our body; our dreams soar over the sea, as white gulls crying pitifully, and now and then dipping their wings into the azure waves, which carry them for a moment, and rock them on their crests; these dreams have, at the same time, the undulations, the phosphorescence, the caprices, the rebellions, and the becalming of Pelagian abysses.

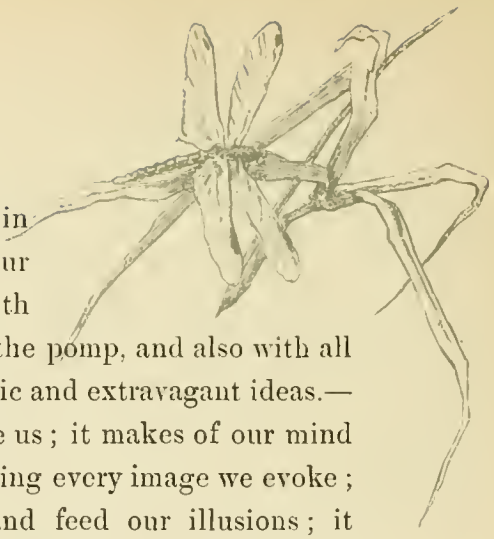
In our rooms, the causality of our dreams changes with the various sensations of the home; the brain more fagged, disturbed, congested by the unhealthy air of voluntary seclusion, urges us more and more into the domain of strange and imaginative paradoxes. Reading, talking, ideas about art investigated as far as the horrible and the beautiful, a curious search after everything eccentric, odd, abnormal, fantastic, and extravagant, lead us to dream in a disturbing, fanciful, indescribable, but unheard of manner. We search for extraordinary incarnations, and pass our life in



fabulous countries, amidst unknown trees and flowers; we sail there, in delicious idleness, on silvery rivers, seated in boats of ivory, gold, and mother-of-pearl, which we carelessly steer with the feather of a gigantic bird. Our dreamy fancy also carries us to some undefined countries of India, where we are pleased to make the laws and regulate the architecture, landscape, climate, and atmosphere, in opposition to all received ideas. We behold there a dull silvery sky, pale and immovable, lit up by an adamantine sun, brilliant as a jewel in a perennial firmament of elegantly cut rose-diamonds, whilst at dawn a moon of a dullish turquoise colour rises on a horizon of pale copper wholly constellated with carbuncles, emeralds, opals, rubies, cats'-eyes, topazes, garnets, and



amethysts. We order there a red and blue vegetation, striped with gold, trunks of trees of amaranth, brown and violet colour, majolica palaces festooned with many-coloured and odoriferous silks; and birds of all kinds with jade, onyx, or sardonyx eyes, and with red, tawny, or green bronzen paws, crowding and moving about as living objects of art. We alone in this country, young, beautiful, always in love, rule over a nation of women of every race and colour, of every style of beauty, of every freak of nature, of all kind of manners and character.—Our dream continues, and we are haunted by a fixed idea which finally creates artificiality. Lying on our Eastern couch, amidst this Chinese and Japanese art which gave birth to the greatest dreamers any generation and people have perhaps ever produced, we languidly pass many hours amidst our fancies. It seems to us that when we leave our palace we are carried in a palanquin on the shoulders of charming female slaves; and whilst we imagine that a singular, primitive, and enchanting music precedes our retinue, our mind's eye, delighted and dilated by this fanciful fairy-show, beholds a panorama in which porcelain domes vie in splendour with minarets of basalt and bell-towers of blood-red jasper.—Neither Golconda,



Bagdad, Heliopolis, nor Visapour equal in beauty, wealth, and stately splendour our royal domain, for we have endowed it with all the precious stones, the magnificence, the pomp, and also with all the superfluities and elegance of our artistic and extravagant ideas.—*Rêverie* gives us what real life cannot give us; it makes of our mind a magnifying and deceiving mirror reflecting every image we evoke; it knows how to delude our desires and feed our illusions; it starts rustling as a dragon-fly and fills our mind with the metallic noise of its flight; it wanders about and strays on various objects, but never settles. It rises up in happiness as well as in misfortune, but art alone captivates it and gives it an exquisite shape; generally music, poetry, or rhythmical prose start it. It knows how to paraphrase a sonata, a motet, or a nocturne on the interminable key-board at its disposal for variations, and the most trifling song becomes, thanks to it, changed into a dithyrambical hymn; it carries within itself gold and diamond dust with which it covers anything dull; it poetises æsthetical thoughts, interprets the symbol of flowers, and deliciously develops the occult language of perfumes.

"Little is needed," says Montaigne, "to stir up our soul; an intangible *rêverie* sways it and agitates it." *Rêverie* induces in us a physical coma through the torpor of its exquisite semi-somnolence; it always arises from a slight congestion of the brain; it brings the sword out of its sheath, and the body feels those perpetual and distant peregrinations of the wandering mind. However foolish it may be to cradle our dreams and thoughts

in a wandering and mystical soul, we will never consent to proscribe this grand consoler, nor to lay on our wings burdens approved of by reason.—A mixed folly, not noisy and not hurting anybody, may be one of the forms of our happiness, if we are at peace with ourselves; for everything is only madness here below, with this difference, that the commonalty does not wish to look at general madness and does not consent to recognise particular cases;—madness is to be mad in any other way than the demented united in society. *Rêverie* is our mind taking wing; it is a big window, through which we look on the infinite; we should often peep out there, for it is morally healthy, but take care not to be allured by the abyss, and become dizzy; we should also try to harmonise and balance conception and execution, apparently two inseparable sisters, but in reality terrible rivals in art. The first, always wandering, invites man, as the Sirens did, to come in her azure grotto, and seduces us Circe like; the second, a laborious Cinderella, often awaits in vain by the fire the aid of her elder sister, without which she can do nothing.—Both call for each other despairingly, but conception is flighty, and does not come back to enslave the active powers of her younger sister, so that Cinderella has to run after the inconstant enchantress to delay her for a moment.—To discipline both by submitting the former to the despotic power of the latter, to lead back conception into the chains of execution, to hold them both in moral tutelage, is the masterpiece of life; for it is to employ the *rêverie* as the motive power of intellectual production,

and to concentrate it in the accumulator of our will, to use it at leisure, and as we inwardly wish it.

Kant says: "The more the conceptions of our mind are enlarged, the more we approach true happiness;"—naturally he only spoke of the conceptions of our understanding, which in reality are only *rêveries* directed towards an effective moral production.

THE COUNTRY

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THE COUNTRY.

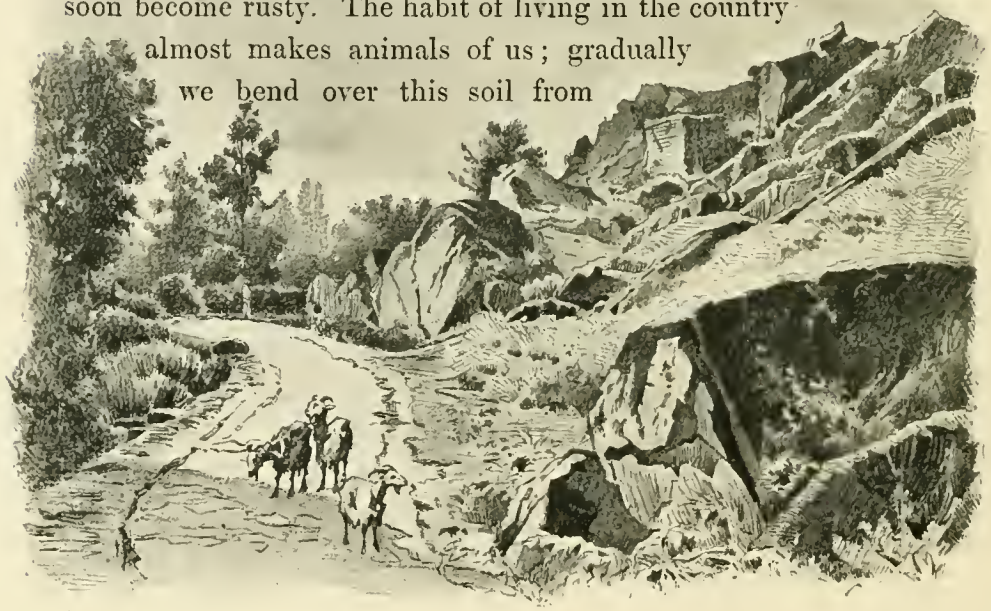
"A love for nature is the only love which does not deceive human expectations. Sooner or later an overwhelming sentiment of the permanency of nature fills our heart, stirs us deeply, and we end by our feeling uneasy about Providence."—BALZAC.

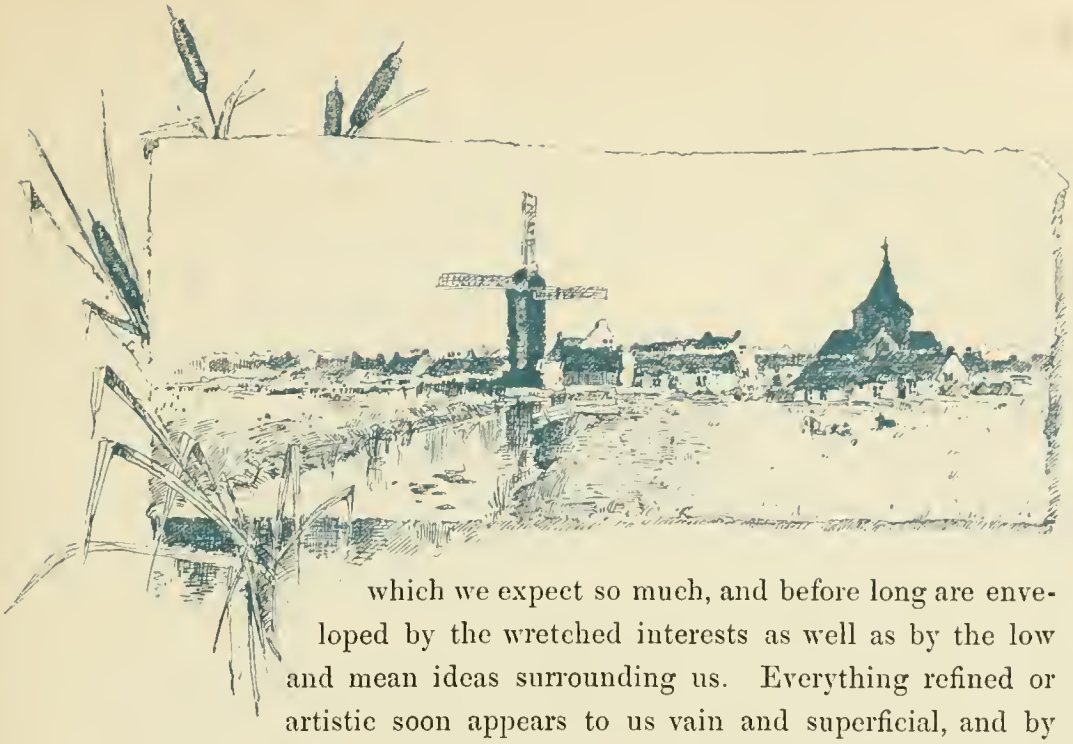
THE author of *Les Paysans* wrote perhaps a little too potentially: "I love a happy and quiet life in the country, where people are always kind, where great and powerful minds can continually exercise their faculties, where every day we discover in the productions of nature reasons for admiring it; and in real progress and real ameliorations an occupation worthy of man. I am aware," he added, "that great ideas engender great actions; but as such ideas are very rare, I find that usually things are worth more than ideas. The man who makes a piece of land produce something, who improves his fruit trees, who makes grass grow on wretched soil, is much above those who hunt after formulas for humanity."

Rural life is undoubtedly the happiest and most pleasant existence for a human being void of ambition and purely contemplative,

who regulates his day according to the sun; but a man who adores the country, without any other horizon than the country itself, must possess the artlessness of genius or the genius of simplicity, and not have a complex, unstable, and venturesome mind, perpetually thirsting after human psychology, and incessantly disturbed by the mystery of creation; within him should not dwell a feverish spirit, only loving solitude amidst the hubbub of crowds; above all, he ought not to be possessed by the demon of strife urging men to go in the midst of the current of ideas and passions. A lover of the country should have a limpid and transparent mind, worship his family, adore children and humble people, be openly and freely merry, and be simple-minded and indulgent; thus he will draw near to Providence, as the Patriarchs did.

Country-life makes us healthy, gives us new strength, and purifies our mind; it sweeps away all germs of disease, and fortifies our virtue when despondent. It contracts, absorbs, and devours even our ideas; it slackens the mainsprings of our existence, which soon become rusty. The habit of living in the country almost makes animals of us; gradually we bend over this soil from

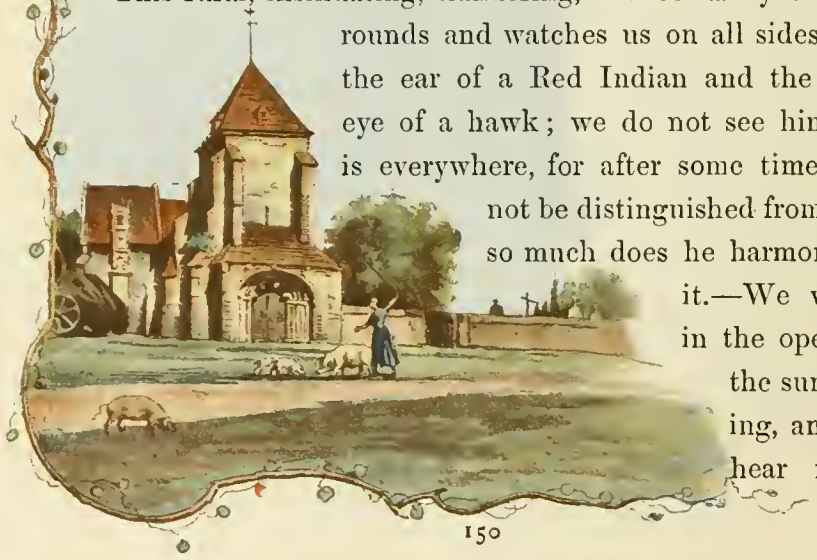




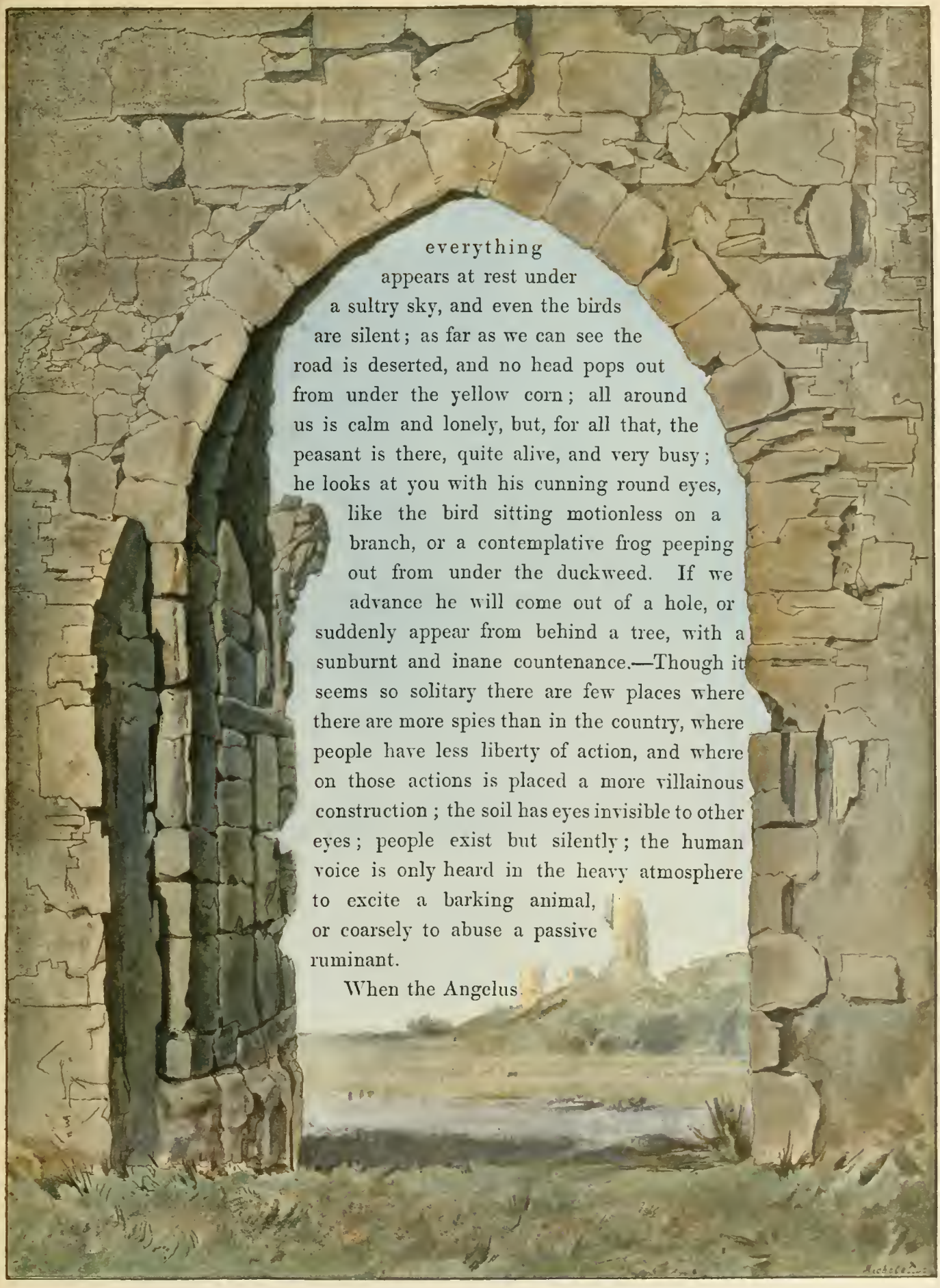
which we expect so much, and before long are enveloped by the wretched interests as well as by the low and mean ideas surrounding us. Everything refined or artistic soon appears to us vain and superficial, and by degrees we neglect those studies or attainments for which we once thought we were created. Moreover, in the country we cannot have the same solitude as in town, where our ideas may be hidden, and our individuality rendered impervious; in town solitude is within ourselves, it brings back our thoughts to us, restrains and narrows our desires and cares, and for ever makes us dwell in a congruous home. The country, on the contrary, makes us give up more of our time to *rêveries*, according to the state of the atmosphere, the shape of passing clouds, or the charms of the picturesque landscape before us, for "nature," as Fontenelle says, "has the marvellous secret of diversifying all things, and at the same time of matching them by compensations."

Moreover, through successive revolutions, we are very far from the country gentleman of the seventeenth century, who enjoyed in peace the property of his ancestors, without ambition or political ideas, and without being tormented by a vain desire of changing his position, or deceived by the false expectation of some chimerical rise. The horizon of that gentleman of the olden time was limited to the estate which he cultivated; he received his reward when

there had been a good crop, and enjoyed his small income amidst the respect and attentions of the peasants willing to serve him. In the morning he only paid court to his lands, and in the evening remained with his family instead of going visiting; the chase was his amusement, and fishing his useful recreation. He kept the festivals of the Church, which he attended regularly, so that God might bless his labours. He almost realised the type of Horace's happy man, in an age when tillers of the soil settled as one family under one master. Nowadays, vestry quarrels, the rights of the people, voting, the lowering of the priesthood, the diffusion of lay education, and the subdivision of the land, have made of the peasants animals unchained, hostile, irreverent, evil-disposed, watching with a crocodile's patience the large landed estates they will gradually swallow up. Quotations of Horace and Virgil are now out of place, for the wretched struggle for money is as intense in the country as in town, but in the country displays more low cunning, compromises, and duplicity, and shows itself with a meanness and odious ambiguity, a rampant villainy, and a never changing, slouching gait.

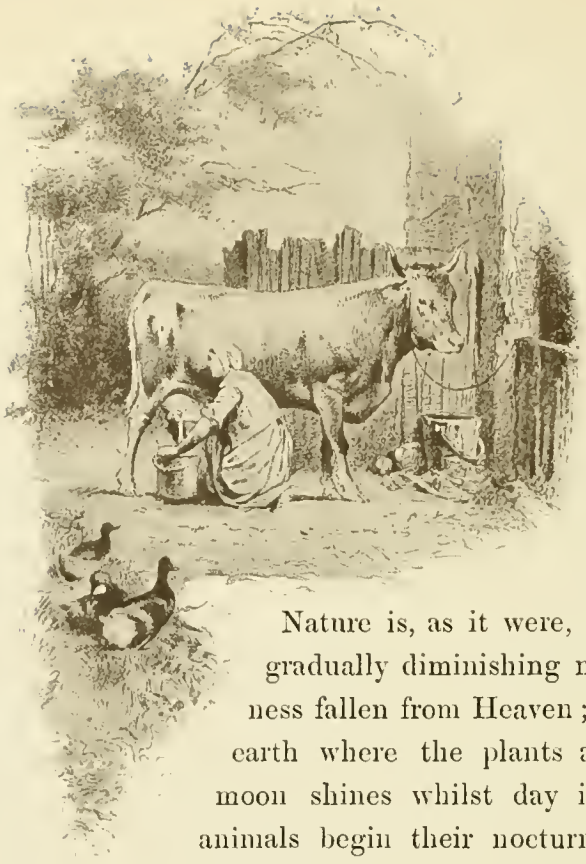


This rural, insinuating, slandering, and cowardly enemy surrounds and watches us on all sides; he has the ear of a Red Indian and the piercing eye of a hawk; we do not see him, but he is everywhere, for after some time he cannot be distinguished from the soil, so much does he harmonise with it.—We walk out in the open whilst the sun is shining, and see or hear nothing;



everything appears at rest under a sultry sky, and even the birds are silent; as far as we can see the road is deserted, and no head pops out from under the yellow corn; all around us is calm and lonely, but, for all that, the peasant is there, quite alive, and very busy; he looks at you with his cunning round eyes, like the bird sitting motionless on a branch, or a contemplative frog peeping out from under the duckweed. If we advance he will come out of a hole, or suddenly appear from behind a tree, with a sunburnt and inane countenance.—Though it seems so solitary there are few places where there are more spies than in the country, where people have less liberty of action, and where on those actions is placed a more villainous construction; the soil has eyes invisible to other eyes; people exist but silently; the human voice is only heard in the heavy atmosphere to excite a barking animal, or coarsely to abuse a passive ruminant.

When the Angelus



is tolled, the country becomes animated, and distant voices, tinkling bells, and loud footsteps are heard, for then the peasants come back from the fields, and the cattle, after having quenched their thirst, return with a gentle and slow gait to the stable to be milked. Nature is, as it were, tired of its labour, and the gradually diminishing noise seems to us a drowsiness fallen from Heaven; night already envelops the earth where the plants are thirsting for dew, the moon shines whilst day is declining, and the small animals begin their nocturnal concert, in which will be predominant just now the slow, sad, sonorous, and charmingly plaintive voice of the toad—that little monster with its gentle eyes, that not understood Mirabeau of the claims of the batrachian race.

Then by the light of the lamp—at the beginning of this ambient melody rising from east to west, from north to south—we collect our thoughts; the serenity of the night refreshes us, and produces in us many grave and enchanting ideas, and a new feeling of comfort; we feel that repose is lying in wait for us, and we are startled by that mysterious and eternal series of days and nights, and by the wheels of time dragging us towards an unavoidable death; our illusions, dreams, and fancies, those winged bats of our dark existence, fly, rustle, and despotically deck our mind; we take up a book and think we are reading: we dream.—Outside the quiet is only

disturbed by the far away barking of dogs belonging to farmers or sheep-folds. There is in this silence something solemn which gets hold of us, and instinctively makes us pray and collect our thoughts as if we were in a church. "The majestic night," wrote Balzac, "is really contagious; it is imposing, it inspires. . . . There is some hidden power in this idea . . . everything sleeps, and I am awake."

Staying up in the country at night disturbs us and gives us a feeling of mystery, and almost of superstition; this gigantic and inscrutable night surrounding us is filled with strange mysteries, and keeps us awake, as if on the edge of an abyss; we fall asleep weighed down by an obscurity which seems to animate and develop our inward light, and to make it more restless, intense, and even ludicrous through this profound and sacred darkness.

Therefore we bless the dawn when it comes to say matins on our closed eyelids, and brings us down, like birds, on the branch of life; as soon as it is light our mind beats the reveille in this sublime renewal of nature, where everything vibrates, retakes its freshness, and sighs amidst a harmony formed by millions of sounds of animated beings, dwelling in the wood, the water, the air, and the grass, blind at night, and welcoming the return of the fertilising star. For the sun in its infinite majesty is the true divinity of the earth, the justly divinised Helios, the Mithra of the Persians, the Phra of the Egyptians, the mythological Apollo, touching us all as it did the statue of Memnon, and making us feel joyful as soon as it appears; it is the god of all human fermentation; the grand

getter-up of the beauties of the country, the brilliant torch of day which, like joyous butterflies, draws us body and soul towards its glorious sphere of light. Without the sun the country would be in mourning and widowed. —Behold a spring morning under a sombre and grey sky; gaiety and vegetation are stopped; an invincible somnolence and despondency, a feeling of weariness fills the air; life is sad, dull, almost overwhelming.

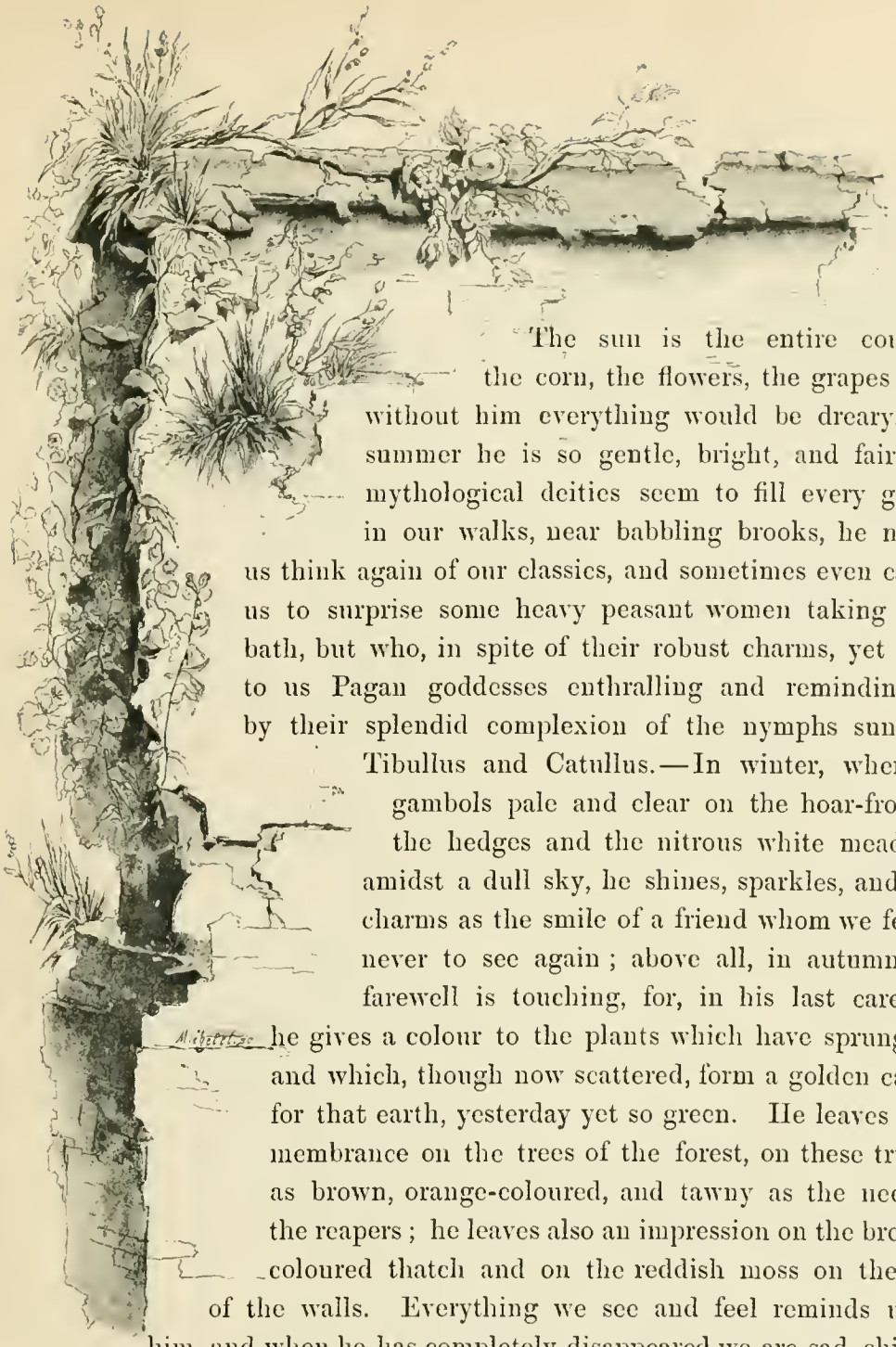
All at once the sun slowly pierces the clouds; at first he lights them up, edges them, fringes them, caresses and illumines them, then bores through them, disperses them, and drives them away. Then he sheds his brilliant rays, carrying everywhere life, strength, hope, and love; he displays and distributes himself on all points; he slips in sombre dwellings, puts a ruby tinge on the glasses in the inn, and songs on the lips of the peasants within; he filters through the brushwood a golden rain, powdering the locks of the Hamadryads of the forest; and the dark shadows falling are the sombre contrasts of his power.—Beneath these simple sunny rays nature becomes festive and attractive. Everything revives and rejoices: the labourer on the threshold of his door, with gay and joyous mien and sparkling eyes, is whistling a tune and rubbing his horny hands in token of joy; his wife appears with a baby

at her breast, whilst at this very hour the cloyed and sickly minds of townsmen resuscitate, dilate, and take wing in the splendidly clear atmosphere.—The sailor gets ready to start for this sea as brilliant as an azure mirror; humanity improves, becomes indulgent, and congratulates itself, and the lover feels himself born again, and sees his beloved in an idyllic dream. He beholds Edens full of delights and rustic *tête-à-têtes;* he feels his youth stirring within him, and can hardly contain his joy and his vague desires; he dreams of kisses given and returned; in a word, lust rises to his head and expands his senses—it is the fault of the sun!

The sun is the universal new birth; the trees shake off their dark bark under a sparkling light; they throw their shadows on the ground as if to look at them and measure them, now that they are no longer convalescent; their young buds seem like eyes staring with astonishment, serenely contemplating the Heavens.—Under the kisses of the divine star all nature arranges its garments; the delighted birds sing, gambol, plume their feathers, fight, stretch themselves, and sentimentalise in their forest language; the farmyards are all alive, and the dung-hills become heated and ferment. Everything revives and multiplies; the tomtits and the wagtails have new dresses to conquer new loves; the nightingale opens the competition in the college of vernal hymns; little snakes and adders put on new skins, and venture to creep out of their winter's

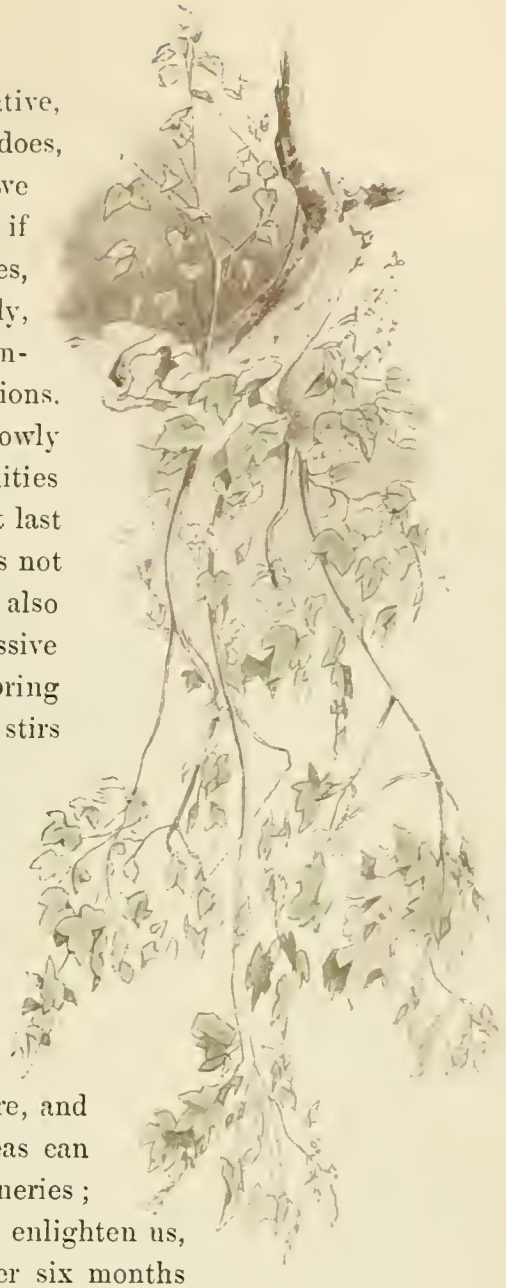
nest, whilst the gentle and indefatigable lark always mounts upwards, and soaring in the air distils its crystalline notes, a Te Deum of love and gratitude delightfully rising on high as an ardent and fervent ecstatic prayer.

The sun produces more masterpieces in one second than men of genius do in the whole of their existence. He is indeed the incontested divinity of this congealed earth which turns lovingly around him; he is indeed the god of poetry, music, and all arts, and without him we should be æsthetically as badly endowed as the Laplanders or Icelanders are.



The sun is the entire country, the corn, the flowers, the grapes; and without him everything would be dreary. In summer he is so gentle, bright, and fair that mythological deities seem to fill every grove; in our walks, near babbling brooks, he makes us think again of our classics, and sometimes even causes us to surprise some heavy peasant women taking their bath, but who, in spite of their robust charms, yet seem to us Pagan goddesses enthralling and reminding us by their splendid complexion of the nymphs sung by Tibullus and Catullus.—In winter, when he gambols pale and clear on the hoar-frost of the hedges and the nitrous white meadows, amidst a dull sky, he shines, sparkles, and still charms as the smile of a friend whom we feared never to see again; above all, in autumn, his farewell is touching, for, in his last caresses, he gives a colour to the plants which have sprung up, and which, though now scattered, form a golden carpet for that earth, yesterday yet so green. He leaves a remembrance on the trees of the forest, on these trunks as brown, orange-coloured, and tawny as the neck of the reapers; he leaves also an impression on the bronze-coloured thatch and on the reddish moss on the top of the walls. Everything we see and feel reminds us of him, and when he has completely disappeared we are sad, chilled, and kindle on our hearth armfuls of branches giving out all their solar heat, slowly stored in their wooden cells, and this factitious sun warming our body and senses suddenly enlivens us.

Whatever has been written about the charms of rustic life, we may add that they elevate the soul but give no food to the mind; whatever may be our existence in the country, the ideas of man become rusty and narrow in his monotony and physical and moral comfort. Now, happiness deprives the human mind of its genius, its grandeur, its nobility of expression found in suffering, restlessness, and struggles. When everything within us is silent, peaceful, and quiet, we become dull and grow stout amidst an alarming epicurism. We no longer feel stir within us that science of living, that agitation of desire, that impetuosity of passion, and that effervescence of ambition which purify and subtilise our materiality. Observe that the sublime nearly always originates in intense grief for which man seems to be created. When the tempest ceases to rage within us, when on the infinite ocean of our soul the waves flag and become quite calm, the divinity of our being seems to have less grandeur; indifference slowly covers us with its grey shroud; our heart is superannuated, and our mind no longer rears impetuously as a general anxious to win a battle. We must always have a promised land, otherwise our ideas give way; happiness makes the animal stout and puts fetters on our thoughts.—Grief and passion, amidst a blast of madness and doubt, have given birth to all sublime works and have hardened the iron will of



superior minds. We are not created to be contemplative, and if we wrestle not with the soil, as the peasant does, struggle with it, and dig in its bowels to fertilise it, we must at least fight for others, and sow kindness, even if we reap ingratitude, or else contend against ourselves, by fecundating our most extensive patrimony, namely, our brain, which has been left us with many encumbrances, through the atavism of numberless generations.

In this intelligent culture of our thoughts we slowly discover the prodigious diversity of the various qualities and faults of which our nature is composed. We at last study ourselves with some interest, and discover in us not only a duality formed of passion and wisdom, but also many odd sensations introduced into us by the successive races which have formed us. These sensations only spring up when there is strife, when a struggle agitates and stirs our blood; the moment we love, labour, sacrifice ourselves, take bold resolutions, we feel within us the profound eddies of contrary currents, and drawn in every direction by the voices of mysterious opinions, the last and distant cry of ancestors whom we disown, we feel the pleasure of imposing silence on all those doomed of our flesh, by the supreme decision of our masterly will.

In the country we are in communion with nature, and we think at first that our thoughts and healthy ideas can raise us above all human comedies and social buffooneries; in the beginning of our rural life calm and solitude enlighten us, and capitally corroborate our first feelings; but after six months or a year our nerves have become unstrung, and all our intellectual and active strength is really relaxed; we dawdle amidst wretched local interests, mean surroundings, and the drowsiness of the

country overcomes us, and makes us indulge in an idleness so much the more dangerous and overpowering as it is less easy to discover.

"Now I live no longer in the country, you will receive more letters from me," wrote one day Madame de Sévigné, on her return to town, and thus the pretentious letter-writer artlessly acknowledged what influence rural torpor had on the most restless and insatiable female lecturer in the world. She also felt disarmed through this contemplative life, and abdicated her mannerism before the grandeur and incommensurability of nature; but she went back to town to recover her strength and elegance, and also to report, in her peculiar style, the small talk and gossip of the Court.

To divide our life between the town and the country, to get cured of the sophistications of the first by the restoratives of the latter, deeply to love this contrast, and to economise physically and morally in the country, in order later on to be extravagant in society, is common sense. In short, we can live in town and die in the country, if we wish alternately to excite our virtues and calm our human passions.

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